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## An Experiment in Interpreting Pre-Modern Heroic Narrative

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**Abstract:** The epic hero is a cyborg. This apparently anachronistic claim agrees both with contemporary definitions of “cyborg” and with the construction of heroes in pre-modern epic. The paper offers a test case in Cethern Mac Fintain, a minor character in the Irish Táin Bó Cuailnge (Cattle Raid of Cooley), who after being wounded in battle is fused to his chariot in order to continue fighting. The argument here is expanded to the Táin more broadly as well as to the Iliad and Beowulf; it concludes that the post-human figure of the cyborg provides a useful lens for examining the intersection of biology and technology in epic heroism.

### Introduction

The epic hero is a cyborg.

But that’s impossible: epic heroes have existed since the earliest Gilgamesh narratives, with histories going back over 4,000 years—or, by the strictest definition, since the earliest versions of the Homeric poems, which are about 1,000 years more recent; the term “cyborg,” on the other hand, has existed only since the mid-twentieth century. At first pass, therefore, the central claim of this paper is clearly anachronistic. And yet—the epic hero is a cyborg. So how does one reconcile the anachronistic nature of the claim to the assertion itself? How does one answer a charge that every undergraduate student of ancient or medieval culture has been conditioned to guard against?

Two responses come to mind.

The claim only looks anachronistic.

Yeah? So what?

Perhaps the best way of pursuing the first response is to consider what the term cyborg means. The word itself, a compound of “cybernetic organism,” was coined in 1960 by Manfred Clynes and Nathan Kline, in a paper aimed at adapting humans to

space exploration. Clynes and Kline define cyborgs as “self-regulating man-machine systems.”[1] More recently, Donna Haraway has defined this creature as “the figure born of the interface of automaton and autonomy” that exists “when two kinds of boundaries are simultaneously problematic: 1) that between animals (or other organisms) and humans, and 2) that between self-controlled, self-governing machines (automatons) and organisms, especially humans (models of autonomy).”[2] More recently still, David Hess, in his discussion of low-tech cyborgs, has defined the cyborg as “any identity between machine and human or any conflation of the machine/human boundary.”[3] What these and other definitions have in common is the idea of the interface between the organic and the technological, and their configuration into a single system. This configuration will function as a working definition of the term.

As the word cyborg is a recent coinage, it is unsurprising that the figure for which it stands tends to be viewed through the lens of recent technology. And seen through that lens, the figure is common. According to Chris Hables Gray, Steven Mentor, and Heidi J. Figueroa-Sarriera, many cyborgs live among us: “Anyone with an artificial organ, limb or supplement (like a pacemaker), anyone reprogrammed to resist disease (immunized) or drugged to think/behave/feel better (psychopharmacology) is technically a cyborg.”[4] This range of everyday cyborgs suggests possibilities from other periods—periods perhaps lacking in the scientific and science-fictional discourses in which cyborgs were first conceptualized, yet in which the relationship between people and technology had already produced otherwise impossible forms.

As noted, Clynes and Kline were looking to the future rather than the past. However, though the term cyborg is not old, the relationships underlying it are. Forest Pyle, for example, notes that our concern with artificial or artificially enhanced beings dates to *Frankenstein*. [5] Jennifer González looks to the dawn of the industrial age, in her discussion of *L’Horlogère* (*The Mistress of Horology*), an anonymous eighteenth-century French engraving depicting a woman and a clock merged to form “a single entity.” [6] But cyborg figures from the pre-industrial period appear rare at first glance. One exception is Níadu in the Irish mythological tale *Cath Maige Tuired* (*The Battle of Moytura*)—Níadu whose hand, having been cut off in battle, is replaced by a silver one installed by the physician Dían Cécht. [7] Another is Icarus, who on donning wings forged by his craftsman father Daedalus, ventures briefly into the realm of cyborghood—functions briefly as a “self-regulating man-machine system”—before plunging to a very organic demise. In these cases, human and technology, the born and the made, merge, with the technology mediating the human’s participation in a sphere or activity from which it would otherwise be excluded. The question of anachronism is thus moot: if cyborgian relationships between the biological and the technological can be demonstrated in the case of epic heroes, then epic heroes can be understood as cyborgs. [8] The claim, in other words, only looks anachronistic. [9]

But even if it is—so what?

Let’s play.

Let's play a game.

Let's play a game of What If:

What if the epic hero were a cyborg? What if his armaments were not merely things that he used (tools), but rather components in a biological-technological hybrid identity? How would this understanding affect the reading of these characters, and of the narratives in which they appear? How, for example, would it affect interpretations of heroes and heroism; of the agency or autonomy of heroes, and their relationships to the societies for which they fight; of the tensions and instabilities that often exist within these perennially fascinating, often unstable, and frequently de-stabilizing figures? How, in turn, might the discourses of science and technology studies contribute to an understanding and appreciation of the mythic and the literary? Does epic hero as cyborg, epic hero as hybrid, demand a hybrid reading, a cyborg reading: a rejection of the boundaries that traditionally separate academic disciplines? In this context, the very idea of anachronism may signal a staking out of borders that are ripe, maybe over-ripe, for transgression.

Test Case

A test case might be useful—in this case a minor figure from the medieval Irish epic *Táin Bó Cuailnge* (Cattle Raid of Cooley).[10] The *Táin* is the longest and best known narrative of the Ulster Cycle, a group of tales centering around the men of Ulster prior to the arrival of Christianity in Ireland, their court at Emain Macha, their king Conchobar, and their greatest hero *Cú Chulainn*. The epic tells of the war between Ulster and Connacht, the latter led by its titular king *Ailill* and his powerful wife *Medb*, over the queen's desire to steal the great brown bull of Ulster. Incapacitated by a curse that leaves them suffering pangs akin to childbirth, the men of Ulster must sit out much of the fighting, leaving *Cú Chulainn* to hold the border alone. Toward the end of the narrative, they begin to rouse and join the fighting, and the epic culminates in a battle that leaves not only the armies decimated but also the land itself permanently changed.

While much has been written about the *Táin* generally, and about specific major characters such as *Cú Chulainn*, *Medb*, *Fergus*, and the goddess *MorRígan*, many of the saga's minor characters have received little critical attention. One such character is *Cethern Mac Fintain*. *Cethern* appears in only four tales out of eighty in the Ulster Cycle,[11] and in all but his appearance in the *Táin* is little more than a name rounding out lists of names.[12] And yet this one fully realized appearance is both startling in itself and potentially informative as to the nature of epic heroism not just in the *Táin* specifically but also in heroic literature at large. The transformation that *Cethern* undergoes, while unique in its extremity, offers valuable insight into the relationship between epic heroes and their armaments, and may serve as a metaphor for the constellation of elements that come together in narrative after narrative to form the figure of the warrior hero.



In his appearance in the Táin, set prior to the culminating events while Cú Chulainn, exhausted and wounded, has withdrawn to receive healing, Cethern steps into the principal hero's place. He charges into the opposing ranks composed not just of the men of Connacht but of all the armies of Ireland excluding that of Ulster, but is severely wounded, emerging from battle with his entrails lying about his feet" ("cona inathar ima chosa").[13] He is inspected by several physicians, all of whom pronounce him mortally wounded and all of whom receive fatal blows for being the bearers of bad news.[14] Finally, the physician Fíngin presents him with the choice "either to lie sick for a year and then survive, or straightaway to have sufficient strength for three days and three nights to attack his enemies." [15] That Cethern chooses the latter is no surprise; his quintessentially heroic decision is similar to those of both Cú Chulainn in his youthful taking up of arms and Achilles in his choice to fight at Troy—to opt for a short heroic life, in preference to a long life of obscurity—but the enactment of his choice is unusual. Cethern is first given a mash of cow marrow, and then sleeps for a full day and night. The following day, his broken and missing ribs are replaced with the ribs of his chariot frame. His wife gives him his weapons, and finally he "attacked the host then with the framework of his chariot bound to his belly" ("fosnópair in slog iarom ⁊ a chreit a c[h]arpait i nn-imnaidm fria thairr").[16] Sayers notes that Cethern's mash of cow bones "recalls the Celtic cauldron of rejuvenation and plenty," and that "This absorption of animate power is followed by the assumption of inanimate yet highly symbolic strength" in the binding of the chariot frame to himself "as a gigantic substitute for armour,"[17] suggesting as well that the episode "contain[s] the motif of self-sacrifice in addition to the other parallels of transference, interchange, and reconstitution." [18] Dooley sees his wounds as bodily inscriptions, "graphs of Cethern's heroic deeds," and his reassembly as an interpretation of those deeds in the context of heroic narrative.[19] As he is prepared for battle, Cethern wilfully sacrifices his humanity, first by his absorption of the animal marrow, and then by the insertion of artificial ribs: components of a machine of war. He is transformed into a man/weapon, made physically one with his chariot. Moreover, even discounting the fact that he is killed the first day he rejoins the fight, his three-day expiration date defines him as disposable, or in other words as valuable only in his immediate heroic context.

One might, then, consider Cethern as a reflection of the type of heroism exemplified by epic heroes generally—and here it is significant that he is acting explicitly as a stand-in for the hero of the epic: his choice dehumanizes him, reconfiguring chariot and man into a single unit whose value exists only in its capacity to fight. In this sense, the impossible restructuring of Cethern's body functions as a stripping of illusion, a revelation of the hero as a figure occupying the border between the human and the non-human—his nature as not just born but made, as not just man but also machine and therefore tool. In Cethern, we see the complicity of society in the construction of the hero. In Cú Chulainn's case, the king does not know that the boy to whom he grants arms is choosing a short life in return for fame; Cethern is literally rebuilt to be

short-lived but deadly, and the rebuilding is carried out by members of his society, specifically by those with the technical knowledge to get the job done. In fact, Cethern is a cyborg—his body merged with the body of the chariot, the “machine/human boundary” utterly conflated and the resulting “man-machine system” rendered autonomous within the parameters of its design, namely, combat.

#### A Broader Application

Yet Cethern’s example alone cannot make the case for the epic hero as cyborg. To make that case, the apparently unique extremity of Cethern’s hybridization must be accounted for: no other pre-modern hero of whom I am aware undergoes so complete an integration with the technology of his time. How, then, might one claim that epic heroes in general are cyborgs? As the figure of Cethern makes clear, the obvious point of organic/technological interface where the warrior hero is concerned, is armaments. Not only does the hero’s relationship with his armaments constitute him as a cyborg, but the tales in which he appears also constitute him, through their portrayal of that relationship, as a being apart from his fellow humans: *Arma virumque scribo*, [20] and the arms of which I write transform the man who dons them.

The means of transformation are interesting in context of the epic arming type-scene and the notion of liminality—both the liminal zone and the liminal state. Examples of liminal zone are the space between Troy and the Greek camp in the *Iliad*, Grendel’s mere in *Beowulf*, or in the *Táin*, the space between the armies on Muirthemne Plain or any ford in which Cú Chulainn meets an opponent. Van Gennep notes that whoever crosses into such a zone “finds himself physically and magico-religiously in a special situation for a certain length of time: he wavers between two worlds.” [21] Or in terms more directly applicable to heroic action, “The necessary horizontal plane of adventure begins where settlement and the solidities of culture, political order, and secular authority end.” [22] When the hero goes to work, that is, the place to which he goes is profoundly unstable.

The arming scene itself is thus a preliminal ritual, in which the hero moves into a liminal state appropriate to the space he is about to enter. Much of *Iliad* 19 is devoted to Achilles’s preparations for combat: his donning of his god-forged armor, [23] his selection of weapons, [24] and his mounting of his chariot. [25] As regards the armor, the best example is the shield forged by Hephaestus [26]—a shield whose imagery encompasses all levels of the human world at war and at peace [27] and that thus associates its bearer, both by virtue of its origin and by virtue of its imagery, with a superhuman or extra-human order of reality. Similarly, before *Beowulf* descends into Grendel’s mother’s mere, the most explicitly liminal location in the Anglo-Saxon epic, the hero’s arming is described in exquisite, though realistic detail. The account of his donning of the boar-crested helmet is instructive:

The shining helm shielded the head, that helm which had to stir up the lake-bottom, seek the surging water adorned with treasure, wrapped in lordly bands, as the

weapon-smith had worked it in days of old, formed with wonders, adorned with boar-figures, so that afterward neither brand nor battle-sword might bite it.[28]

Similarly, the sword lent to Beowulf for the occasion is also given full, if somewhat ironic, attention:

The name of that hafted sword was Hrunting; that was one of a kind among ancient treasures; the edge was iron, set about with serpent-patterns, hardened in battle-blood; never in battle had it failed any man who gripped it with his hands, when he dared to undertake dreadful journeys, a hostile folk-stead; that was not the first time that it had to do a glorious deed.[29]

The arming of Cú Chulainn is also narrated in detail just after he has been healed by his divine father Lugh and just prior to one of the young hero's most spectacular distortions.[30] His body is clothed in twenty-seven shirts and bound with strings and ropes intended to hold him together so that neither his body nor his mind disintegrates when his warp spasm comes upon him. He is decked out in hardened leather and assorted finery and takes up an extravagant array of weapons including nine each of swords, spears, javelins, and shields.

Then he put on his head his crested war-helmet of battle and strife and conflict. From it was uttered the shout of a hundred warriors with a long-drawn-out cry from every corner and angle of it. For there used to cry from it alike goblins and sprites, spirits of the glen and demons of the air before him and above him and around him wherever he went, prophesying the shedding of the blood of warriors and champions.[31]

Over all goes a cloak given him by his Otherworldly tutor Scáthach.[32] As with Achilles's armour, the associations of Cú Chulainn's armaments with the non-human realm are hard to miss. The helmet seems to be associated with the panic-inspiring war goddess Nemain as the conditions under which she comes to his aid are similar to those created by the helmet itself, namely, the noise of his war cry. Thus, by putting on the helmet, Cú Chulainn is associating himself more strongly still with forces antithetical to an ordered human society. As for the ropes that bind the raging hero, these bear direct comparison with the ribs of Cethern's chariot. In either episode, the warrior's rage, and his unstable biological parts, are contained within a martial structure: the chariot frame in Cethern's case and in Cú Chulainn's, the hardened shirts over which the ropes are placed.[33] Both characters are literally held together by human artifice—both constructed and directed toward the only end for which, by virtue of both their temperaments and their current configurations, they are suited.

In each case, the hero is publicly seen to suit up for his encounter with the liminal: the putting on of armour and weapons thus functions as a ritual of separation, and signifies a change of what van Gennep refers to as "social and magico-religious position." Or simply, as Turner phrases it, "Ritual is transformative." [34] By means of this particular ritual of separation, the hero moves into a different position in regard to his relationship with the world; he becomes something other than what he was. To

borrow another and oft-cited line from Turner, "Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial." [35] The hero's armour is a visible sign that he is no longer bound by the rules and mores of day-to-day life. [36]

In arming, the hero thus undergoes a change of state: his capacities are augmented, both enhanced and contained, by the technology he adopts. Such an intimate augmentation by means of weapons—in donning armour the hero is literally inside the technology—may be different from the cyborgs of science fiction, or of contemporary military research, in degree, but not in kind: this is as close a relationship between the born and the made as is generally possible in the worlds of pre-modern epic.

One possible objection to this claim is that, unlike Cethern, epic heroes often fight very well without their augmentations, as Cú Chulainn does against Fráech, as Beowulf does against Grendel, and as Achilles does against whoever stands between him and the body of Patroclus. Addressing this objection requires a further look into cyborg theory.

Not all cyborgs are alike. Gray, Mentor, and Figueroa-Sarriera, referring to real and potential cyborgs, identify four categories: restorative, normalizing, reconfiguring, and enhancing. The first two do not concern us as they are primarily intended to restore lost functions, limbs, organs, and appearances [37]—although Núadu would have found the restorative category interesting. On the other hand, cyborgs of the third category, the reconfiguring cyborgs, are "posthuman creatures equal to but different from humans, like what one is now when one is interacting with other creatures in cyberspace or, in the future, the type of modifications proto-humans will undergo to live in space or under the sea." [38] It is to this category that one can assign Cethern, whose body has been modified far beyond normality to function in a hostile environment—the battlefield—to the extent that he is only ambiguously human in the conventional sense. [39] This leaves the fourth category, the enhancing cyborgs, which Gray et al. identify as "the aim of most military and industrial research." The purpose of this type of cyborg is to improve human performance through what might be termed intimate technological involvement, "from factories controlled by a handful of 'worker-pilots' and infantrymen in mind-controlled exoskeletons to the dream many computer scientists have—downloading their consciousness into immortal computers." [40] Many epic heroes, having donned their armaments in a pre-liminal ritual, fit into this category, as people whose abilities have been enhanced through the medium of technology and whose identities as heroes depend at least in part on their relationships with that equipment—a dependence supported by the sheer ubiquity of epic arming scenes and the close relationships that heroes often bear to their hardware.

As noted above, though, Gray and his colleagues are primarily concerned with real or potentially real cyborgs. Coming at the cyborg from the angle of popular culture, a body of discourses in which it has been a common figure since before the term was coined, Mark Oehlert proposes three types of comic-book cyborg: the simple controller,

the bio-tech integrator, and the genetic cyborg.[41] As might be expected, the last two do not concern this study as the technology upon which each is based was not available to the conceptual worlds in which ancient and medieval epics were composed. In the case of the first, however, that absence is not so clear. A simple controller is a cyborg resulting from the augmentation of a human with artificial parts. The parts may be internal as with the hero Wolverine, whose skeleton has been augmented with metal and who has been given retractable metal claws, or they may be external or even detachable as with Iron Man, whose iron suit with its modular attachments provides him with superhuman abilities while also protecting his defective heart.[42] In such cyborgs, human and non-human parts are discrete, and the human part is in sometimes tenuous control; the non-human augments the human and is subordinate to it, while still constituting an essential component of the overall identity or self of the (hu)man-machine system.

Once the reader gets past a possible reluctance to include figures such as Wolverine and Iron Man in the same category as epic heroes—or past a more formal reluctance predicated upon disciplinary boundaries—parallels between Oehlert's simple controller cyborg and Cethern become apparent. That both Wolverine and Cethern have technologically augmented skeletons, and that those apparently inextricable artificial augmentations are integral to their abilities to function, are obvious examples. Regarding Cú Chulainn, Achilles, Beowulf, and a wide array of other epic heroes, on the other hand, Iron Man may provide a more relevant model. That his iron suit functions as armour may be too obvious to mention, but the role of that armour in the construction of a cyborg self is not. In both epic and pop culture cases, the hero's body is, as noted above, contained within the technology, which in itself forms a boundary between the character's living flesh and the world in which he moves and fights. Moreover, in each case the armaments are unique to the character, and thus linked to his own uniqueness. And in every case, the donning of the armour marks a change of state, indicated by the preliminal arming rite in the epics, and by the change of names in the case of the comic-book hero: Iron Man, when not suited up, is known as Tony Stark. The character's identity is thus mediated by his relationship with the technology he employs.

One possible objection to the depiction of epic heroes as cyborgs is that they do not, as noted above, always use their armor and weapons, while Iron Man cannot function as Iron Man without his iron suit. It is not necessary, however, for the hero's relationship with his augmentations to be permanent as, for example, Wolverine's is. Gray et al. are quite clear that the human-technology interface need not be everlasting for the resulting system to be classified as a cyborg. They identify a fifth category that cuts across the boundaries of the four mentioned above: the intermittent cyborgs, people who merge with technology in intimate but temporary relationships, such as a dialysis patient, or a pilot wired into a cockpit.[43] The defining factor is not that the organic/technological interface be permanent, but simply that it exist, and that the



resultant system be qualitatively different from its constituent parts, and autonomous within the parameters of its construction. Alternately, we might employ N. Katherine Hayles's category of the metaphoric cyborg, a category she sees as "including the computer keyboarder joined in a cybernetic circuit with the screen, the neurosurgeon guided by fiber optic microscopy during an operation,"[44] or in other words anyone who temporarily links with technology to engage in an activity that would otherwise be difficult or impossible, as Beowulf, for example, elects to use weapons and armour against the dragon, an opponent he could not have taken on barehanded, and as Cú Chulainn uses the gae bolga,[45] apparently a barbed and many-pointed spear-like weapon that he propels through the water with his foot, to overcome opponents who might otherwise get the better of him. Thus, taking the foregoing categorizations into account, one might classify the epic hero as an intermittent or metaphoric cyborg of either the enhancing or simple controller type.

So What?

So the hero is a cyborg. But what do cyborgs do, culturally speaking, that might be relevant to ancient and medieval epic? One possibility is that they offer a glimpse into the link between war and the technology of war—and the tensions implicit in that connection. Its configuration as both biological and technological provides a vehicle for exploring the reciprocal relationships between people and their machines.[46] For instance, the link between the hero and the smith may be relevant here as the smith—divine or otherwise—is definitively linked with technology. One might remember that Cú Chulainn during his raging distortion can be likened to metal on the smith's forge,[47] and that Achilles, Aeneas, and Beowulf all bear weapons and/or armor associated with divine smiths. Epic draws attention to the relationship between heroic action and weapons technology, acknowledging the intimate role that such technology plays in constructing a heroic identity, and we must therefore consider this link to what might be termed the epitome of culture: the act of crafting formless metal into something that is not just a tool, which would be human enough, but into something that is also an aesthetic object. Where the hero's rage, most spectacularly represented by Cú Chulainn's oft-discussed distortion, or by Achilles's wild assaults on the trench in which Patroclus's body lies and on the River Scamander, represents the disordered or disordering facet of his character, his weaponry, and its associations with craft or technology,[48] represent culture and thus order, placing the hero himself on a border in which the two opposing states are not only coexistent but also symbiotic—the rage giving volition and direction to the technology, which in turn enhances the effectiveness and reach of the rage. This is a cyborg state: the body, interfaced with state-of-the-art weapons technology, becomes more effective in its given task than it could otherwise be, while the image of the cyborg has historically recurred at moments of radical social and cultural change. From bestial monstrosities, to unlikely montages of body and machine parts, to electronic implants, imaginary representations of cyborgs take over when traditional bodies fail. In other words, when the current

ontological model of human being does not fit a new paradigm, a hybrid model of existence is required to encompass a new, complex and contradictory lived experience. The cyborg body thus becomes the historical record of changes in human perception.[61]

González is interested in the images of cyborgs produced since the dawn of the industrial age, during which machines came to dominate human life and thought in a manner previously unknown. Yet the tensions underlying the conflicts in epic literature also embody such a potential moment of “social and cultural change,” and the body of the hero most certainly takes over “when traditional bodies fail.” The hero arises in response to a threat to the existing social order, and the traditional human body does not fit the paradigm of heroic action; it is incapable of performing at the level required for the preservation of the society under threat. Thus, insofar as “a new social space requires a new social being,”[62] and insofar as a combat zone can be considered a “new social space,” existing outside the apparently stable social centre and working to rules often antithetical to those of the social centre, the epic hero is exactly the kind of new social being required by the new social space. “In other words, the cyborg body marks the boundaries of that which is the underlying but unrecognized structure of a given historical consciousness. It turns the inside out.”[63] Thus, the often inhuman and dehumanizing violence that lies at the heart of the hero’s rage, his unique and wild energy, is reflected by his technological attachments, configured as they are for often superhuman violence: the slaying of a dragon, for example, or the taking on of an entire army. His heroism is, paradoxically, both integral to his character and, in a real physical sense, modular—prosthetic. In either case, it is not entirely or purely human.

#### Conclusion

It is with this problematization of the boundaries of the human that I conclude. As Pyle observes, “when we make cyborgs . . . we make and, on occasion, unmake our conceptions of ourselves.”[64] He goes on to suggest that the construction of cyborgs “means the unmaking of the human through the anxious recognition that both were assembled in the first place.”[65] The constructedness of the category human is foregrounded by the construction of cyborgs that, in themselves, challenge the definition of the human by making us aware that there is a definition. And if humanity itself is a constructed concept, an occupant of one side of an arbitrary border, as the figure of the cyborg suggests, then all notions of purity, hybridity, and fixity are also revealed as arbitrary. Seen through the critical lens of the cyborg, the epic hero suggests a similar realization: What the hero is, is what his society has constructed him, in some cases literally built him, to be. He occupies a border between agent and tool, born and made, largely by embodying that border himself. As Haraway observes, “Cyborgs are about particular sorts of breached boundaries that confuse a specific historical people’s stories about what counts as distinct categories crucial to that culture’s natural-technical evolutionary narratives.”[66] They make us uncertain about

the borders of the self, about what constitutes selfhood—the contents or referent of those apparently simplest of words: “we,” “I.” Heroes are both born and made. They preserve the integrity of their societies by sacrificing themselves to the shifting needs of violent confrontation, and in so doing become other—or illustrate by their exaggerated example, our own everyday alterity. Cethern is an extreme, though by no means unique, embodiment of this sacrifice. In trying to protect the breached border of his own land, he allows the border of his body to be breached. He is changed beyond any purely biological image of humanity, but changed in a way that reflects that most conspicuous of all epic type scenes: the arming of the hero. In becoming a cyborg himself, Cethern reveals the cyborg nature of other warriors, illustrating their mixed nature through his own hybrid body.

#### Appendix 1

a. Following is a description of Cú Chulainn’s warp spasm that accompanies the arming scene under discussion:

His hair curled about his head like branches of red hawthorn used to re-fence a gap in a hedge. If a noble apple-tree weighed down with fruit had been shaken about his hair, scarcely one apple would have reached the ground through it, but an apple would have stayed impaled on each separate hair because of the fierce bristling of his hair above his head. The hero’s light rose from his forehead, as long and as thick as a hero’s fist and it was as long as his nose, and he was filled with rage as he wielded the shields and urged on the charioteer and cast sling-stones at the host. As high, as thick, as strong, as powerful and as long as the mast of a great ship was the straight stream of dark blood which rose up from the very top of his head and dissolved into a dark magical mist like the smoke of a palace when a king comes to be waited on in the evening of a winter’s day. (TBC1 2243-78; O’Rahilly 187)[67]

b. The following passage illustrates the disordering or inverting nature of the warp spasm. The speaker in this passage is Fergus MacRoich, recounting an early episode in which Cú Chulainn, as a boy, flies into a rage:

Thereupon he became distorted. His hair stood on end so that it seemed as if each separate hair on his head had been hammered into it. You would have thought that there was a spark of fire on each single hair. He closed one eye so that it was no wider than the eye of a needle; he opened the other until it was as large as the mouth of a mead-goblet. He laid bare from [sic] his jaw to his ear and opened his mouth rib-wide[?] so that his internal organs were visible. The champion’s light rose above his head.

Then he attacked the boys. He knocked down fifty of them before they reached the gate of Emain. Nine of them came past me and Conchobar where we were playing chess. Cú Chulainn leapt over the chess-board in pursuit of the nine.[68] (TBC1 428-38; O’Rahilly 137)

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Jennifer González, "Envisioning Cyborg Bodies: Notes from Current Research," in *The Cybercultures Reader*, 541. ♣

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Gray, Mentor, and Figueroa-Sarriera might disagree, noting that we are aware of relationships that our ancestors could not conceptualize—that our awareness of our relationship with technology makes us, or many of us, cyborgs (Gray, Mentor, and Figueroa-Sarriera, "Cyborgology," 6). However, in insisting on our awareness of relationships alien to pre-Modern conceptual frameworks, Gray and his colleagues ignore the fact that modern people themselves may never think about the integration of technology into their bodies. Awareness of the concept cyborg is not a precondition for cyborhood. ♣

N. Katherine Hayles, in her contribution to the recent inaugural issue of the journal *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies*, addresses this matter as well, pointing out to "those who wonder if juxtaposing posthumanism and premodern studies invites anachronism," that "'human' is a historically specific construction that has changed over time, and that the function of 'posthuman' is not so much to denominate a particular configuration as to open areas of contestation in which one or more qualities associated with the 'human' come under challenge" (269). ♣

The saga survives in two recensions. The first is preserved in two manuscripts: the eleventh–twelfth century *Lebor na hUidre* (Book of the Dun Cow) and the fourteenth-century *Leabhar Buidhe Lecain* (Yellow Book of Lecan). The second recension is contained in the twelfth-century *Lebor Laignech* (Book of Leinster). The language first recension has been dated to the ninth century, with some poetic passages evoking a still earlier dialect (Ann Dooley, *Playing the Hero: Reading the Irish Saga Táin Bó Cuailnge* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006], 5). ♣

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See Appendix 1.a. ♣

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*Ibid.*, ll. 3176–3201. ♣

*Ibid.*, 213, ll. 3296–98: "huthar eo cend mbliadna ⁊ beathu dó iarom fa nert trí lá ⁊ trí n-aidchi fo chétóir do imbert fora náimdib." ♣

*Ibid.*, ll. 3300–14. ♣

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*Ibid.* ♣

Dooley, *Playing the Hero*, 34–36. ♣

"I write of arms and the man." ♣

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Homer, *Iliad*, 19.387ff. ♣

Homer, *Iliad*, 19.392ff. ♣

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# Strange Parallels of Early Modern Sacredness

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**Abstract:** This essay explores a strange parallel in the way that sovereignty was imagined in early modern South Asia and Europe. At the end of the sixteenth century, when the Mughal emperor Akbar embraced Christian messianic symbols and Catholic icons to make himself the most sacred being on earth, the English playwright Christopher Marlowe used the myth of Akbar's world-conquering ancestor from Inner Asia, Timur or Tamburlaine, to fashion an enduring drama about the ultimate sovereign. The questions why Akbar in India turned to Jesus while Marlowe in England focused on Timur throw new light on the nature of religion and kingship across early modern Eurasia.

The Mughal emperors of India were obsessed with Jesus. They adorned their palaces and tombs with Catholic icons.[1] They titled their queens "Mary." [2] They had their princes tutored by Jesuit priests, who had been invited to the imperial court in the late sixteenth century.[3] In imperial paintings, the emperors had themselves depicted alongside Christ, and sometimes even as Christ.[4] We can imagine the Jesuits' initial elation—and eventual perplexity—at the fervor with which the Mughals, a Sunni Muslim dynasty of Inner Asian origins, embraced the signs of their faith. This was true not only for the "free thinkers" among the Mughals, like Akbar (1556–1605) and Jahangir (1605–1627), but also for the allegedly more "orthodox" ones like Shah Jahan (r. 1628–1658). There exists at the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C., an enigmatic painting in which the builder of the Taj Mahal is marked by a halo linked to the heavens by rays of light (Figure 1).[5] In the light hovers a dove, the Holy Ghost, and above the clouds is God the Father. In place of the Son, though, is Shah Jahan, rendered in perfect profile, the very form of sovereignty.

In a recent book, *The Millennial Sovereign*, I discussed the talismanic use of Christian and European-style art in the messianic self-fashioning of the Mughals, which took place at the end of the first Islamic millennium.[6] I revisit some of these arguments in this exploratory essay, but with a different end in mind. I examine here a strange parallel between the cultural histories of early modern India and England. In the late sixteenth century, while the emperor Akbar, a proud heir of Timur (d. 1405),

was using Christian iconography in his theater of sovereignty, the young Christopher Marlowe was ushering in a new age of theater in Elizabethan England, with a play based on Timur, called *Tamburlaine the Great*.<sup>[7]</sup> Why Akbar embraced “Jesus” in India and why Marlowe was inspired by “Timur” in England are questions that, when considered together, open up a new perspective on the religious and political imagination linking these distant regions. As the essay’s title shows, the analysis here is indebted to *Strange Parallels*, the second volume of Victor Lieberman’s landmark work on early modern Eurasia.<sup>[8]</sup> The nature of this debt will become clear as the different fragments of the argument fall into place. For now, let us begin with a closer look at why the Mughals were drawn to Jesus.



Figure 1: Shah Jahan with Asaf Khan (detail from folio). The late Shah Jahan Album. Painted by Bichitr, c. 1650. Opaque watercolor and gold on paper mounted on paperboard, 36.9 x 25.3 cm. Source: © Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.: Purchase—Smithsonian Unrestricted Trust Funds, Smithsonian Collections Acquisition Program, and Dr. Arthur M. Sackler, S1986.403

Was it all propaganda—a boast that the Mughals of India were holier than the God of the Franks? If so, the question arises: Why Christianity? Would Islamic and Indic symbols not have been more relevant to the Mughals for making such divine assertions? There was not a Christian constituency to speak of in Mughal India, or for that matter, in Iran or Central Asia, the places from which much of the Mughal nobility hailed. And though Jesus and Mary were Islamic figures mentioned in the Quran, their use in the ceremony and pomp of sovereignty was rare in the broader history of Muslim kingship; the staple myths of sacred kingship were those of Solomon, Alexander, and the heroes of the pre-Islamic Iranian epic, the *Shahnama* (Book of Kings).



At first glance, it seems that the Mughals' turn to Jesus occurred in India. The first two Mughal rulers, Babur and Humayun, who had spent more of their lives in Central Asia and Iran, had not marked themselves with Christian signs and names. The process appears to have begun with Akbar and his invitation to the Jesuits in the late 1570s to participate in the religious discussions at his court. And today the matter seems so bizarre that it receives little more than a passing mention in the standard histories of the Mughal empire, and more as cultural marginalia than as serious politics. Art historians have paid the phenomenon greater attention because of the quantity and quality of Catholic-themed images produced at the Mughal court.[9] But, for the most part, besides cataloging and describing this Mughal fixation—and in a few cases making fun of it—the art historical approach only takes us so far in making sense of it.

But make sense of it we must, for it is a trace of the strong cultural link that the Mughals had with Europe. Today we tend to classify the Mughals with the Ottomans, the other "Sunni Muslim" empire of early modern times, and expect the two to reveal synchronized cultural behavior.[10] This, however, is not how history unfolded. While the Ottomans also had a Turkic, nomadic heritage, and borrowed much from the Turkmen and Timurid court cultures of fifteenth-century Iran, by the time they had set up in Istanbul and the Mughals in Delhi and Agra, there was little formal contact between the two dynasties.[11] The Mughals enjoyed greater cultural exchange with the Safavids of Iran, their immediate neighbors, and with their seafaring contemporaries from Western Europe. They considered the Safavids, fellow adherents of Timurid kingly norms, a civilized people. But they thought of the "Franks" as a peculiar maritime tribe, nomads patrolling the seas, whose kings were not wealthy enough to send proper gifts.[12] Thus it is between Iran and Europe that we must search for an answer to the Mughals' mysterious love of Jesus.

Let us turn first to Iran. The early history of the Mughals in the days of the first two dynasts, Babur (r. 1526–1530) and Humayun (r. 1530–1556), is entangled with the rise of the Safavids in Iran. In the first half of the sixteenth century, it was the Safavids who made the Timurid princes of Central Asia and India their clients, and styled themselves as the true successors of Timur (r. 1370–1405), the Mughals' Inner Asian ancestor who had become a major symbol of sovereignty after his conquests swept across nearly all of Asia.[13] Today, the Safavids' suzerainty over the Mughals and their embrace of Timurid norms receives little notice. There are two reasons for this neglect. First, in the second half of the sixteenth century, the Mughals' imperial project in India was so successful that they eclipsed their former Iranian overlords in wealth and power, and staked a viable and independent claim as worthy legatees of Timur. Second, at this time, the Safavids began to impose doctrinal Shi'ism on Iran and thus became known as sectarian devotees of Ali, the fourth caliph of Islam. It is Ali whom the Shi'is consider the rightful heir of his father-in-law and first cousin, the prophet Muhammad, and as leader of all Muslims.

Since the Safavids decreed the conversion of Iran's population to doctrinal Shi'ism, there is good reason to think of them as a quintessential Shi'i dynasty. But such a categorization does not capture the spirit of their first century of rule. As they conquered Iran, the Safavids fashioned their sovereignty around Ali in a mode that was neither doctrinal nor juristic but epic. The Safavids rose to power by enacting a messianic myth of Ali.[14]

The religious climate of fourteenth and fifteenth century Iran and Central Asia was dominated by what scholars call "Alid loyalty," a popular, excessive devotion to Ali, kept alive in oral legends that portrayed him as the perfect saint and warrior. In the aftermath of the social and political dislocations wrought by the Mongol conquests of the thirteenth century, the region was awash in Sufi movements whose leaders claimed to be the messianic embodiment of Ali. Also prominent in this milieu was a strand of Islamic belief known as *ghulat* or "exaggeration" in which the spiritual guide was venerated as the godhead. In the late fifteenth century, the Safavids had incubated such an exaggerated messianic enterprise in their dynastic shrine in Ardabil in northwestern Iran.[15] Safavid missionary agents recruited Turkmen nomadic tribes willing to fight in the name of the Safavid savior. These soldiers were called the *Qizilbash*, a Turkish word meaning redheads, for the color of the headgear they wore as a sign of their submission to their Safavid leader and "perfect guide" (*murshid-i kamil*). They would go into battle without armor, believing in their saint-king's powers to protect them, and, to prove their devotion, they would reportedly break the strongest of taboos, the consumption of human flesh.[16] In sum, the Safavids in their first century were neither a doctrinally Shi'i group, nor an anomalous sect on the margins of Islam. Rather, they were very much a product of their time insofar as they believed that Ali had been reborn on earth in the form of their king, Shah Isma'il.

The historical process that shaped the Safavids had also played a part in Timur's enactment of sovereignty a century earlier. The great conqueror and his successors had engaged with Alid messianic myths. And in doing so, they had embraced Jesus. The Alid-Jesus messianic myth was inscribed on Timur's epitaph in Samarkand and can be read even to this day.[17] This Arabic inscription was carved on a block of nephrite jade that one of Timur's grandsons had brought from the edge of China to adorn his ancestor's mausoleum. It proclaimed Timur's descent from Alanquva, a mythical Mongol princess, mother of all Mongol sovereigns, who had given miraculous birth to their line of early kings. The birth was miraculous because it was fatherless. In the *Secret History of the Mongols*, composed not long after Chinggis Khan's death in 1227, it was said that the father of Alanquva's sons was a creature who crept like a yellow dog. But this shamanistic detail had evolved by the time of Timur, when the Mongols in Iran and Central Asia had largely converted to Islam. In the Islamized version of the Alanquva story, the Mongol princess was equated with the Mary of the Quran:



And no father was known to this glorious ancestor, but his mother [was] Alanquva. It is said that her character was righteous and chaste, and that “she was not an adulteress” [Quran 19:20]. She conceived her son through a light which came into her from the upper part of a door and “it assumed for her the likeness of a perfect man” [Quran 19:17]. And [the light] said that it was one of the sons of the Commander of the Faithful, Ali son of Abu Talib.[18]

In describing the way Alanquva conceived her progeny, the inscription used fragments from the Quranic chapter on Mary, in which the mother of Jesus is visited by an angelic being of light who took human shape. According to the Quran, Jesus was a prophet who was born miraculously without a father. However, the most active role ascribed to Jesus in the Islamic traditions is that of an end-of-time figure, expected to reappear alongside the mahdi (the guided one), an heir of Ali. Timur’s tombstone inscription invoked this apocalyptic expectation when it asserted that the being of light who visited Alanquva’s bedchamber had taken the shape of a descendant of Ali. Thus, by the fifteenth century, the earlier Chinggisid-era animal myth had been replaced with the Islamic messianic one about Jesus and Ali.

All this sounds manifestly absurd today. To make it familiar, we must adjust our thinking or, to paraphrase Peter Brown, rearrange some of our seemingly immovable mental furniture.[19] As Brown had refrained from turning to “popular religion” as an explanation for the rise of the early Christian cult of the saints, we too must not relegate the Alanquva story to the realm of vulgar Mongol belief. After all, it was written on Timur’s tombstone in Arabic, a language of Muslim religious specialists and not the Mongol masses. Thus we must make sense of it within the broader episteme of the time.

First of all, let us imagine how time was experienced in the Timurid era. As Benedict Anderson famously pointed out, our experience of time, the time of the nation, is empty and homogenous. By contrast, the time of the dynastic realm was “messianic . . . a simultaneity of past and future in an instantaneous present.”[20] We may expand on this gnomic insight to suggest that for those who experienced the time of kingship in post-Mongol Iran, such as the readers of Timur’s epitaph or the listeners of Chinggis Khan’s secret history, the yellow dog, Ali, and Jesus served less as metaphors than as metonyms. That is to say, Mongol sovereigns were not simply like these figures—they were these figures. It also implies that for kings, forms of divination and the epic tradition were of more immediate significance than the writing of chronicles. Chronicles were written for later generations, but astrology and epics offered a scheme of action for the present. It was no accident that Timur’s famous title—Sahib Qiran or Lord of Conjunction—was a messianic label he shared with the popular heroes of the epics, such as Abu Muslim, Amir Hamza, and Ali; yet it was an expression derived from the elite science of astrology.[21]

Such a perspective sheds new light on the Safavid and Timurid appropriation of the myth of Ali. Within a few generations after Timur, his progeny had lost the power to

make good on such sovereign claims. This did not prevent them from trying, however. Even a century after Timur, in the reign of the last Timurid ruler of Khurasan, Ali's grave—which was already reputed to exist across Iran and Iraq in Najaf, Kufa, Baghdad, and Rayy—was also “discovered” near Herat and became a site known as Mazar-i Sharif (Noble Shrine), a city now in Afghanistan.[22] The Timurid ruler immediately proclaimed the find a major blessing for his rule and promoted pilgrimage to Ali's shrine as an alternative to hajj, the annual Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca. But a few years after the king's death, the Safavids took Herat. As they conquered Iran, the Safavids appropriated wholesale the myth and body of Ali. They made their own dynastic shrine in Ardabil an Alid one by linking the genealogy of their eponymous ancestor, Shaykh Safi al-Din, to Ali.[23] And they replaced the Timurids as patrons of the famous shrine in Mashhad of Imam Reza, a descendant of Ali and the eighth Shi'i Imam. At the time, Iran was not Shi'a but the enshrined Imam Reza was venerated as the “sultan of Khurasan,” that is, as the “real” sovereign of the region.[24] A painting from a sixteenth century Book of Omens(falnama), now in the Louvre in Paris, even depicts Imam Reza as an epic hero astride a horse, lance in hand, charging toward a giant demon.[25] This development—that is, the growth in the epic stature of the enshrined Alid saint at Mashhad—had taken place over the fifteenth century under the patronage of the ostensibly Sunni Timurids. But it was the Safavids who transformed the imam's grave into their imperial shrine, merging their sovereign reputation with that of the most famous Alid saint of Iran.

Why is any of this relevant for understanding the Mughal obsession with Jesus? It is relevant because in the sixteenth century the Safavids had taken away from the Timurids the latter dynasty's sovereign link with Ali. But they had left them the symbol of Jesus. When the Mughal emperor Akbar, a direct descendant of Timur, celebrated his grand new empire in India, he chose Jesus and Alanquva to revive his miraculous lineage but left out all mentions of Ali. Thus, in the chronicle of his reign, the Book of Akbar (Akbarnama), Alanquva was once again equated with Mary but the light that penetrated her did not take on the form of a descendant of Ali as it had done in the inscription on Timur's tombstone.

The Book of Akbar states that this divine light,

which took shape, without human instrumentality or a father's loins, in the pure womb of her Majesty Alanquva, after having, in order to arrive at perfection, occupied during several ages the holy bodily wrappings of other holy manifestations, is manifesting itself at the present day, in the pure entity of this unique God-knower and God-worshipper (Akbar).

How many ages have passed away!

How many planetary conjunctions occurred,

That this happy star might come forth from heaven![26]

And so Akbar was born as a Lord of Conjunction, a sovereign like Timur and a messiah like Jesus. His Hindu queen who had born him sons was declared the “Mary

of the Age.” His sons were tutored by Jesuit priests. His court scholars learned Latin to deepen their understanding of Christian scriptures.[27] His artists began to draw iconic Christian scenes, which adorned Mughal gardens, palaces, jewelry, and even tombs.[28]

As a prelude to all of the above, Akbar’s sacred self was unveiled during the millennial celebrations at court, held at the height of his reign in 1582. The episode is commonly known as the inauguration of Akbar’s failed religion, the so-called *Din-i Ilahi* or Divine Religion. But in historical terms it was a successful attempt to raise the body of the king above the distinctions of religion. That it was the end of the first Islamic millennium, a moment of immense messianic expectations, served only to cement the Mughal emperor’s sacred assertions. In preparation, moreover, the Mughal emperor had held discussions among the different sacred traditions of the realm. In these debates, he had openly sided with his Christian guests, the Jesuit priests, who in Akbar’s opinion had gotten the better of their Muslim rivals.[29]

The contest between religions held under the gaze of the Mughal emperor involved much more than sharp arguments based on solemn scripture. When the matter between Islam and Christianity could not be settled by reason, Akbar had proposed a spectacular contest.[30] A great fire would be lit and the Christians would enter the flames with the Bible in their hand, and the Muslims with the Quran. Those in the right would walk out unharmed. Although this ordeal never took place—the sources disagree on whose courage failed—we do know that Akbar was willing to see Muslims and Christians, the Quran and the Bible, burn together.

Such a scene is difficult to imagine today: the simultaneous burning of two holy books and their human bearers in a spectacle arranged for a Muslim king. From where Akbar received the idea of an ordeal by fire—a discussion with a Jesuit priest, the Indic epic *Ramayana*, or his own fertile imagination—is a question that will not detain us here. Rather, the point worth emphasizing is that the Mughal emperor possessed both the power and the will to play with the most sacred symbols of his time. At the turn of the Islamic millennium, he had declared himself a saintly being—not unlike the antinomian mystics of his time—as above the constraints of religion. Transgression—what we would call heresy today—was for holy men like these a path to sacredness, a way to set themselves apart. Akbar was not the only monarch to take this path. He had recent models to follow, such as that of Shah Isma’il of Iran, the Safavid founder, and of his own ancestor, Timur. For these rulers, Islam existed less to be followed and more to be made use of. Religion, especially in the post-Mongol era of Islam, was an instrument of cosmic power for kings, not just a path to salvation. This is perhaps nowhere more applicable than in the case of Timur.

Timur had ruled as a son-in-law of Chinggis Khan and also pretended to be a descendant of Ali. Instead of adhering to one tradition of Islam, he had patronized—or terrorized—them all, while praying in Mongol style to the everlasting sky. His main engagement with Islam was via a mimetic engagement with Sufi saints. Timur did not

build a single madrasa but erected shrines of unprecedented scale for his patron saints.[31] Timur's power over the ulama, the jurists and judges of Islam, was also absolute. Ibn Khaldun, the famous North African judge and intellectual, described how in 1401 he groveled in front of Timur outside the walls of Damascus, a city that the conqueror was about to take and pillage. He had heard what had happened to another eminent judge only a few days before. The man had broken protocol by sitting down without waiting for Timur's instructions. For this mistake, the conqueror had him stripped, cursed, beaten, and dragged around "like a dog." [32] To save himself from such a fate, Ibn Khaldun ingratiated himself by declaring Timur to be the Lord of Conjunction and the prophesied savior.

While Akbar did not aspire to Timur's level of cruelty, he and his heirs certainly saw themselves as enacting the sovereign myth of their ancestor. Timur's conquests across Asia had made him the most successful Muslim conqueror of all time. His success, it was widely believed, did not come from earthly endeavors, but was instead cosmically ordained. Timur remained undefeated until the very end, a sign of being the Sahib Qiran—the Lord of Conjunction. Or we could say, Timur was the Lord of Conjunction and so could not be defeated. Akbar's millennial celebrations were about his conquest of the richest lands of Asia. He too was undefeated, a Lord of Conjunction. His father, Humayun, had danced with joy when he had seen his newborn's horoscope, for it was better than even that of Timur.[33] This meant that Akbar, even more so than Timur, was born to fulfill the destiny of Alanquva's Jesus-like progeny.

At this stage, it is tempting to roll one's eyes at Akbar's pretensions. Lest we give into this temptation, it is important to remember that sacred kingship was first and foremost a performative institution. The myths enacted by monarchs like Akbar were derived not from scriptural religions but from heroic epics—preserved in ancient legends such as the Persian Book of Kings (*Shahnama*) and in the living memory of world domination by the likes of Timur—that transcended doctrines of salvation and systems of ethics.[34] In this vein, Akbar's embrace of Jesus at the height of his power was the enactment of an epic truth that Timur had also achieved: that the emperor was the most sacred being on earth and above the distinctions of religion.

Akbar's grand performance was most ably captured and rationalized by the emperor's court savant, Abul Fazl, who composed the voluminous *Book of Akbar*. In this masterpiece of history and hagiography, the courtier depicted his master as the "perfect man," the *insan-i kamil* of Sufi metaphysics, who maintained the balance of the cosmos.[35] But this was more than just a mystical concept. The universal cosmology of the perfect man was an esoteric one, erected upon the Hermetical cabbalistic foundations of 'ulum-ghariba, the occult sciences—what we would today call "magic." [36]

In early modern India and Iran, the occult sciences were thought to derive from Hermes, the "Thrice Great" or "Triplicate in Wisdom," an antediluvian sage identified with the biblical Enoch and the Quranic Idris. By early modern times Hermes was

considered a prophetic figure of great interest to those pursuing an “eternal truth” in the form of a unified cosmology and chronology that transcended religious difference.[37]Hermes was also believed to be the first prophet to whom the science of the stars was revealed. Even the Book of Akbar declared that it was Hermes who “guided men to the reverence of the Great Light (the sun).”[38] Thus the sun became central to Mughal kingship—in the imperial veneration (darshan) ceremony, in the initiation of royal devotees (murids), and even in the rituals prescribed for the commander-in-chief (sipah salar) of the Mughal army.[39] None of this was peculiar to Akbar. His father, Humayun, had also organized his courtly space and rituals around alchemical and astrological principles.[40] In short, Hermetical knowledge pervaded Mughal culture and shaped the imperial cosmology of the perfect man.

However, here we find ourselves at an impasse. Despite his centrality to the occult traditions of such use to Muslim saints and kings, the place of Hermes in the social and religious history of early modern India and Iran remains to be properly studied.[41] Kevin Van Bladel’s recent and excellent study, *The Arabic Hermes* is the only book-length work on the topic. But its focus is on early textual traditions, not social or cultural history. To learn more about this ancient sage, we must turn to Renaissance Europe where Hermetic philosophy and magic was rife. Over the last century, Hermeticism in Europe has been studied widely across the disciplines; in fact, some in Renaissance studies would consider Hermeticism and the place of related occult traditions a passé matter, exhaustively explored by the 1980s.[42] This may be so as far as scholarship on Europe is concerned, but it is time for a fresh look at Hermes from a global and transcultural perspective. Indeed, one could argue that what the perfect man was to Mughal India, the Renaissance magus was to early modern Europe. But when we turn to Europe to learn about Hermetical ideals, what do we find? We come face to face with Timur performing on the Elizabethan stage.

At the end of the sixteenth century, during Akbar’s millennial celebrations, the English theater was entering its mature phase, soon to be ruled over by William Shakespeare. But the play that cleared the path for Shakespeare and launched the high era of Elizabethan drama was *Tamburlaine the Great*. Written by the young Christopher Marlowe in two parts, the first of which was performed around 1587, the play was a riotous success, and inspired a slew of “Turkish” dramas based on Muslim characters.[43] *Tamburlaine*’s plot was simple—in fact, one could say there was no plot at all. But the protagonist was mesmerizing. As a lowborn Scythian who rises to power over all of Asia, *Tamburlaine* is unstoppable. He wins all battles, defeats all foes, and takes all their women. He yokes defeated kings to his chariot and orders the slaughter of captured virgins. He declares himself the scourge of God, but also taunts the heavens. Although cruel beyond imagination and blasphemous beyond belief, *Tamburlaine* is immensely attractive—a sublime figure. In short, Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine the Great* was not a meditation on the human condition but an epic of human self-assertion enacted on a cosmic scale.



Although the play brought him renown, it also landed Marlowe in trouble. The reason was the playwright's attitude toward religion. Consider the scene in which Tamburlaine spurns his religion, Islam, and orders the Quran to be burned:

Now, Casane, where's the Turkish Alcoran,  
And all the heaps of superstitious books  
Found in the temples of that Mahomet,  
Whom I have thought a god? They shall be burnt.

...

In vain, I see men worship Mahomet:  
My sword hath sent millions of Turks to hell,  
Slain all his priests, his kinsmen, and his friends,  
And yet I live untouched by Mahomet.  
Now Mahomet, if thou have any power,  
Come down thyself and work a miracle:  
Thou art not worthy to be worshipped,

...

Seek out another Godhead to adore,  
The God that sits in Heaven, if any God;  
For he is God alone, and none but he. (Part II, Act 5)[44]

Today, in post-Rushdie England, the Quran-burning scene is often left out when the play is performed. But the ire Marlowe faced at the time came not from Muslims, who were rare in Elizabethan England and of little public concern. It was the Christian establishment that was appalled by the portrayal of a sovereign who taunted not only Islam and its prophet but, it seemed, organized religion itself.[45] They suspected Marlowe of being an atheist, a dangerous charge that condensed together criminality, treason, and heresy—what Stephen Greenblatt terms “a cultural conceit, the recurrent fantasy of the archcriminal as atheist.”[46]

Why would Marlowe take such risks? As a spy, a lover of men, and a freethinker, Marlowe lived close to the boundaries of social acceptability. He also seemed possessed, as Greenblatt put it, by a “will to absolute play,” a restless creativity that drove him to set unsayable questions at the heart of his plays.[47] Marlowe's urge to whisper the public secret was perhaps the secret of his theatrical success. But, ultimately, such a transgressive attitude toward life and literature cost him. He died at twenty-nine of a knife blow above the eye. The official reason was a scuffle among friends over a bill at an inn, but as Shakespeare, his more cautious contemporary, remarked in *As You Like It*, it was “a great reckoning in a little room.”

There is no dearth of scholarship or imaginative literature on Marlowe. In fact, far more is written on Marlowe and his *Tamburlaine* than on the historical Timur. However, the question of Marlowe's attitude toward religion and his disdain for scriptural truth remains unsettled. Some dismiss the frenzied assertions of his *Tamburlaine* as mere flights of fancy while others see the character as a herculean hero

in the guise of an errant Muslim barbarian.[48] Yet there is a consensus that at the heart of Marlowe's Tamburlaine is a "dark playfulness,"[49] a tendency—which was rather Akbar-like—to flirt with the limits of his culture. For instance, in his famous play Doctor Faustus, Marlowe had the lead character conjure a devil on stage—a feat of some boldness given that one could be burned at the stake for trying it at home. So what exactly was Marlowe's goal in staging Tamburlaine in all his cruel and blasphemous glory?

In a perceptive, but much ignored study, Marlowe, Tamburlaine, and Magic, published in 1976, James Howe argued that Marlowe was enacting via the character of Tamburlaine the Renaissance ideal man—the magus:

This then is the strange parallel between the histories of early modern England and India. And it is doubly strange if we compare the historiography of the two regions. Historical, art historical, and literary studies on Hermeticism and sacred kingship in Christian Europe are too many to read. Yet the actual enactment of the Hermetical myth was in Muslim India, Iran, and Central Asia. Where kings were considered divine, we have hesitated to study them as such. Instead, we have marked them as deviant. Where kings were relatively mundane—constrained by the church and the rising bourgeoisie—we have gone out of the way to study their sacred qualities, their ability to cure scrofula and the nature of their two bodies. On the scale of Eurasian history, scholarship seems to be out of tune with the sources. Howe's argument would have rung truer had it been made about the historical Timur and his descendants in India than about Marlowe's Tamburlaine, but we have not even begun to try. What better way to provincialize Europe if we did.

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## The Researching of Mirza Fatali Akhundov's literary heritage in the context of Eurasian Literature and the effects of Russian literary poetry

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### Abstract

Mirza Bala Mahammadzada (1898, Baku- 1959, Istanbul) is one of the prominent personalities having exceptional contributions in social-political, literary- cultural and scientific thought history. As he was a political emigrant in Turkey during Soviet period his life, multi- branched activity and rich creativity were remained out of sight of the researchers, no work was carried out in the sphere of publication and agitation of his scientific and literary heritage. However, both in the period of emigration and living in motherland until the 20s years of the XX century B.M.Mahammadzada worked very effectively and made a plenty of publisistic writings related with the most topical problems of the society. Until emigration he had laid foundation of research of the history of national media with his "Between two revolutions" (1918, Tbilisi) and "Azerbaijan Turkish media" (1922, Baku) monographs.

Researches on classic literature of Azerbaijan have a special place among M.B.Mahammadzada's scientific works which he wrote during his emigration years in Turkey. It should be noted that M.B.Mahammadzada's literary heritage of scientific works in emigration period involving researches on M.F.Akhundzada (1812-1878) who laid foundation of professional drama genre, realist artistic prose and literary criticism in Azerbaijan literature, besides being a great contribution to our country's literary

study, also played a significant role in study of his work in Turkey and keep on providing modern Turkish researchers with abundant materials.

We will conduct analyses on M.B.Mahammadzada's three work included to his scientific heritage of emigration period. These are the articles - "Fatali Akhundzada" (1), "Mirza Fatali and alphabet revolution" (2) and "Mirza Fatali and Pushkin" (3). The article "Fatali Akhundzada" was published in 1945, in *Islam Encyclopedia*, the other two were published in "Azerbaijan" journal printed in Ankara, Turkey. It also should be noted that in all three articles we come across factual erroneousness and it is related with objective reasons; in emigration M.B.Mahammadzada did not have sufficient literature with him, moreover during the years when the articles were written even in Azerbaijan the science of studying Akhundov was in the stage of formation. It also should be emphasized that in the articles there are also M.B.Mahammadzada's own thoughts and considerations born from his political views. And in many cases it reaches to an extreme degree. Presentation of analyses born from purely subjective approach as an absolute truth is regrettable and it does not fit with M.B.Mahammadzada's known level of scientific thinking. M.B.Mahammadzada in the introduction of his article "Fatali Akhundzada" evaluated the role of M.F.Akhundzada in the history of morality of the nation he belonged to quite right and presented him to the Turkish readers as "The first playwright and story-writer who laid foundation of new Azerbaijan literature with his comedies written in Turkish, the first westernist and critic, a herald of alphabet revolution in Turkish with his ideas and initiations on change of Arabian alphabet (1, 577). In the article first period of M.F.Akhundzada's life, his undergoing a family drama due to his parents' divorce, his "second father" Akhund Haji Alasgar's patronage on him, childhood years spent in the Southern Azerbaijan villages, Akhund Haji Alasgar's intention to raise him as a theologian, etc. were given. M.B.Mahammadzada paying special attention to M.F.Akhundzada's first education issue, considered his entering to Russian school and his learning Russian language a planned proposition. He thinks that there is a "secret" relation between Fatali's effort to learn Russian and his once and for ever abandoning the way of priesthood. M.B.Mahammadzada wrote: "The point which requires an attention is pursuit of a second incident his initiation to learn Russian..." (1,578). When he said the "second incident" he meant Fatali's courageous step to go to Tbilisi which changed his future way of life completely: "Haji Alasgar's intention to raise Fatali as a religious scholar as himself remained ineffective due to, as Fatali writes in his biography, "an issue which happened unexpectedly" (1, 578). Actually, M.B.Mahammadzada could not specify what M.F.Akhundov meant (the popular talk between Mirza Shafi Vazeh and young Fatali- Sh.M.) when he said "an issue taking place unexpectedly", but in any way he demonstrated a scientific approach to the problem by saying that behind change of his initial world outlook stood quite serious reasons and by substantiating his thoughts in his own way. M.B.Mahammadzada connected it with the social-political- historical situation formed in Northern Azerbaijan after Turkmanchay

contract (1828) concluded between Iran and Russia. According to M.B.Mahammadzada, restoration of Russian influence in the region and irreversibility of political events shocked the local ruling class and “made them to go to compromise to the Russians” and in a short period there was formed “an intellectual class consisting of the generation trying to assimilate Eastern and Western cultures and serving the Russian in compliance with new conditions” (1, 578). M.B.Mahammadzada reminded M.Sh.Vazeh, A.Bakikhanov, Mirza Kazim bey and M.J.Topchubashov as the first representatives of this class. With this he denied the reason “philosophy” born from atheism, the ideological branch of the political system put forward by the Soviet Akhundov studiers claiming that “Fatali abandoned the field of theology and left for Tbilisi for public administration work due to Mirza Shafi’s reproach (“Do you really want to be hypocrite and charlatan?... Do not waste your life among these disgusting people! Go for another specialty”). We think that the reason, or to be more exact, the change in his initial world outlook that guided Fatali to Tbilisi was directly related with social- political processes of the period and in this issue, we fully agree with M.B.Mahammadzada’s considerations. In the article the attention was also paid to M.F.Akhundzada’s successes in literary creativity who was working as a translator in the Caucasus viceroyalty. M.B.Mahammadzada referring to the autobiography written by M.F.Akhundov indicated that behind this success there stood political objections:

“His works were published still at that time under the name “Tamsilat” and were represented in Tbilisi palace. This favor of Russian mayor to Turkish language was related with a number of political reasons designed for eliminating the influence of the Persian culture on Azerbaijan and to replace it with Russian impact and it is understood from the documents published later showing Russian colonialism policy in Azerbaijan”. (1, 578). It should be noted that this issue was firstly touched in the work “Caucasus Turks” which was written in 1928 by M.A.Rasulzada, one of the founders of the first democratic republic in the East- Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan (4). M.A.Rasulzada wrote about above-mentioned aim of Russia 17 years before M.B.Mahammadzada: “...Russia agitated to write in national Azerbaijan Turkish in order to oppose the East against Iran influence in the Caucasian. Mirza Fatali who is considered the founder of modern Azerbaijan literature wrote his popular comedies with agitation of Vorontsov, the governor-general of Caucasus viceroyalty and as the first Turkish comedies were staged in Tbilisi palace, the writer’s works were also published in the publishing house of the governor-general” (4, 29 ). Of course, governor- general of the Caucasus viceroyalty M.S.Vorontsov’s “favors” for M.F.Akhundzada had evident purposes behind; if on one hand with establishment of national –cultural institutions in the Caucasus the writers were agitated, on another hand the main aim was to put away the tradition of writing in Persian. Although these issues were conducted on a political background and were calculated for political objections, it was a favor of the history that finally it turned into a service to a national literature and culture. In this sense, although M.F.Akhundzada and Georgian

playwright G.Eristavi seem skillful players of this policy, their creativity served for enrichment of the national literature with new types and genres. From this point of view, M.B.Mahammadzada's conclusion on this issue is quite right: "Fatali managed to establish a new literary school opening a new period both in national thinking, and national art fields" (1, 578-579). The analyses show that the aim of the Russian czarism was not only to eliminate Persian influence. Planned rusification policy was being carried out on the background of the care for the national culture. That is, the Persian influence was planned to be replaced by the Russian influence at the end. Establishment of Russian theatre in 1854 in Tbilisi served to implementation of this goal intending spread of Russian language and culture among the local people. The governor-general M.S.Vorontsov wrote it openly in his letter to Gedenov, the director of the Russian Imperial Theatre, asking him to send a theatre troupe for a tour to Tbilisi (5, 9). In the letter that the governor-general of the Caucasus viceroyalty sent to his friend Shepkin on the same day asked him to send an appropriate troupe from Moscow and explained its significance (5, 10). The researcher Ali Musayev while talking about establishment of the Russian theatre in Tbilisi draws attention to M.S.Vorontsov's letter he sent to Nicolay I in 1850. In the letter it is noted that the main aim is provision of assimilation of the local people with the Russians... (6, 12). M.B.Mahammadzada in his researches gave a wide place to M.F.Akhundzada's insistent struggle for new alphabet project and its implementation. In the article written for Islam Encyclopedia M.F.Akhundzada's activity in this sphere had been followed, it was indicated that being impressed by ineffectiveness and failure of his appeals to Istanbul and Teheran he wrote a number of literary works. It should be noted that M.B.Mahammadzada spoke comprehensively about M.F.Akhundzada's struggle for alphabet in his article "Mirza Fatali Akhundzada and his alphabet revolution" (2). In this article based on deep scientific content some considerations causing dispute are also met. After the analyses M.B.Mahammadzada concludes such a verdict that behind M.F.Akhundzada's alphabet projects there stood his intention to make it adopted by Ottoman state or Iran, not to the Russian government to which he served" and it was related with his uncompromising attitude to Russia.

Generally, M.B.Mahammadzada in all three articles of his wrote that M.F.Akhundzada had a hostile attitude towards Russia and "rusification". According to him, M.F.Akhundzada although lost his belief in Turkey and Iran, continued his struggle until the end, however "did not even thought about implementation of this project via Russian channel". Mirza Fatali, describing the Russian king Nicolay I as "a bandit of the world-wide scale" and desiring to raise the contemporary culture of the Moslem nations could not act otherwise" (2, 4). In fact, in these considerations putting aside the essence of M.F.Akhundzada's choice in favor of Turkey and Iran, he tried to politicize the problem and to show allegedly opposite position of the reformist thinker against Russia. Not going further into details let's in briefly note that M.F.Akhundzada sent his alphabet project to Turkey, Iran, as well as Europe's five main countries and

scientific circles in 1857 namely via Russian official channels. From M.F.Akhundov's epistolary heritage it seems that his activities related with a new alphabet had been in the focus of the official circles in Tbilisi up to its smallest details and he agreed every step of his with them. The reasons of launch of Turkish and Persian "channels" in alphabet issue were more accurately evaluated by an emigrant researcher Abdulvahab Yurdsever: "The enlightener earlier proposed this project to Ottoman government. Because Ottoman Empire had an exceptional religious and spiritual influence on all Islam world. This activity, at the same time, shows Mirza Fatali's deep commitment to Turkish and Islamic world. He avoided any individual action. If there was any need for reformation or complete change of the alphabet, according to him, it would be carried out at least with Turkey and Iran. It could not be performed alone. Azerbaijan's cultural relations with Turkey and Iran could not be tear out" (7, p.21). M.B.Mahammadzada's wrong position in this issue, his quite emotional attitude to this problem seems also to be related with two-headed policy of soviet regime regarding alphabet.

Only 10 years later after official replacement of Arabian graphics alphabet with Latin graphics in Azerbaijan in 1929, a transition to Cyrillic alphabet in 1939 M.B.Mahammadzada evaluated as a betrayal to M.F.Akhundzada's ideal, and considered it integral part of a planned policy: "Latin alphabet was removed and Russian alphabet was put into use in order to break the cultural unity ties with the Turks" (2, 5).

M.F.Akhundzada's calling Nicolay I "a bandit on a world scale" is far from the truth. In the original version of the writer's ode known under the name of "Eastern ode to A.S.Pushkin's death" and in the text published in "Moscow observer" for the first time such a phrase was not used: "But why did M.B.Mahammadzada declar such an accusation from the name of M.F.Akhundzada? In order to bring clarification to this or other questions, it is important to pay attention to the original version of the work in Persian (8), the first printed variant (9, 297-302; 10, 145-151) and the second printed variant (11, 76-79).

It should be noted that M.F.Akhundzada wrote this work in Persian and gave no name to it: "It is a mourning ode written by 25-year old Mirza Fatali Akhundzada to the death of the prominent Russian poet Pushkin" is not the name of the work, it is just dedication words of the author to the ode". M.F.Akhundzada himself translated this ode into Russian and adding 12 explanations to it, presented to I.I.Klementyev serving in Tbilisi. I.I.Klementyev sent the ode together with his letter to the editor of the journal S.P.Sheviriyov. The editorship of the journal published this "beautiful flower put on Pushkin's grave" without any change in 1837, March issue. In the work czar Nicolay's name was reminded only in one place, and exceptionally in a positive meaning.

In original in Persian:

"Gereit şöhräte fəzləş cəhan be don gune



Ke şöhrəte Nikolay əz xətay ta tatar" (8)

In "Moscow observer":

"Распространилась слава его гения по Европе, как могущество и величие Николая от Китая до Татарии" (10, 149). ("The glory of his genius spread across Europe like the power and greatness of Nicholay from China to Tataria)

For the second time, the ode was published in 1874, in the 11th issue of the journal "Russian antiquities" with a brief introduction of Adolf Berje (11, 76-79). In the journal the ode for the first time was called namely a poem: "Eastern poem to Pushkin's death". It is known from Berja's notes that a bit later from publication of the ode in "Moscow observer" journal baron Rozen asked Russian writer A.A.Bestujov-Marlinski who was in a military expedition (M.F.Akhundzada was also participant of this expedition) in Abkhazia, Sebel region with him to translate the poem into Russian together with the author. A.A.Bestujev –Marlinski carried out this request of his in a short time. It was the last work of the Russian writer, a bit later, he was killed in a fight against the mountaineers. It is evident that M.F.Akhundov himself told this short introduction to A.Berje and it should be noted that the copy of the ode was given to him by the author also. Here, it also becomes clear that namely A.Berje called this ode a poem.

Comparison of the first published text and the text on which A.A.Bestujev-Marlinski worked shows that the Russian writer did not translate the ode completely once again. He conducted only small editorship works (8; 9, 297-302; 10, 145-151; 11, 76-79). In the line which we take from the "Moscow observer" the words "...and Nicolay's greatness" were extracted and the line was given in "Russian antiquities" in such a form:

"Разошлась слава его по Европе, как могущество царское..." (11, 78). ("His glory spread throughout Europe as the royal power")

Later in the text we come across the parts differing from the original which led M.B.Mahamaadzada's incorrect thought. Let's pay attention to differences of one of these parts: In M.F.Akhundzada's translation into Russian ("Moscow observer"): "Russia claims about it with sorrow: "О убитый рукою убийцы-злодея" ("Hey, you killed by a killer-villain") (9, 302; 10, 151). In A.A.Bestujev-Marlinski's editorship ("Russian antiquities"): "Россия в скорби и воздыхании восклицает по нем: "Убитый злодейской рукою разбойника мира" (11, 79). ("Russia is in grief and sighs on him: "He was killed by the evil hand of the killer"). By the way, it should be noted that the ode had been translated from Persian into Azerbaijani by M.Mushfig, B.Gasimzada and J.Khandan and in none of the translations the phrase "the bandit of the world" was used. Let's pay attention to two of these translations:

"Rusiya dad-fəğan ilə sual etdi yenə:

"Nə üçün quldur əlindən bu təbiət də sənə

Bir xilaskar ana qəlbilə aman vermədi, ah!" (12, 232).

Or:

"Rus torpağı yas tutub, fəğan qılır ki,  
Ey qatillər əlilə ölən namidar" (13, 158).

Unlike the original in Persian in translations into Azerbaijan in spite of "Nicolay" the word "czar" was used. The ode was included to "Selected works" by A.A.Bestuyev-Marlinksi published in 1990 in Russian language as his translation in the version and with the name as it was issued in "Russian antiques" (14, 224-227). As it seems, M.F.Akhundzada in fact, did not call czar Nicolay I "a bandit in a world scale". As A.A.Bestuyev-Marlinksi's editorship in a known style in "Russian antiquities" fitted the soviet ideology, the fibs about M.F.Akhundzada's opposite position against the czar sometimes penetrated to scientific literature also.

Therefore, it is evident from where erroneous considerations of M.B.Mahammadzada who was in an enemy position against the Russian czarist regime in the example of the czarist Russia and Soviet government, derived. M.B.Mahammadzada in his article "Mirza Fatali and Pushkin" (3) stated quite contradictive thoughts regarding the leitmotif of M.F.Akhundzada's above-mentioned ode, as well as the sources from which he benefited in writing it. According to his writing, when M.F.Akhundzada began to his activity as a playwright since 1850 as if he managed to learn French, "but at the time when he dedicated an ode to Pushkin's death, he knew none of western languages" (3, 6). Firstly, M.F.Akhundzada, did not know any of Western languages, including French. It can be seen from his letter to a French diplomat Monsieur Nicolay in December, 6, 1872: "I do not know any European language except Russian" (15, 215). Secondly, why M.F.Akhundzada had to know one of the Western languages in order to write an ode about Russian poet? From M.B.Mahammadzada's conclusions it follows that the author in his ode "... allotted a wider place to Western literature and culture which raised Russian writers including Pushkin" (3, 6) and due to this reason, as he did not know any of western languages he got the necessary information via Ottoman Turkish or by searching. We suppose, it does not need any further explanation. In brief, it should be noted that in the ode there is no talk about Western literature and culture, and M.F.Akhundzada would not need any search for information. Regarding to the influence of European literature on A.S.Pushkin, it is quite a different problem and M.F.Akhundzada in his ode had not got any objections on resolution of this problem. In the article an effort to analyze Pushkin's literary creativity on a political plane, putting aside his position in Russian literature draws attention. Moreover, it is difficult to put up with his verdict that after returning from the exile A.S.Pushkin became a palace poet. According to M.B.Mahammadzada, actually in the poem "Great Peter's Arab" Pushkin was charmed not with Peter's absolutism, but with his imperialism which he evaluated as "patriotism". Or in the poem "Poltava" claiming that Pushkin enjoyed Peter's "bloody freedom" approached to the issue from another prism. M.B.Mahammadzada trying to draw his "political portrait" in this or another sample of Russian poet's poems later came to an interesting conclusion: "Because of this, Mirza Fatali considering him

(Pushkin –Sh.M.) the enemy of czarism and brave freedom fighter devoted a poem to him, but later he reminded his name neither in his literary nor in philosophical works” (3, 8). From M.B.Mahammadzada’s logic it follows that A.S.Pushkin’s attitude to czarism did not satisfy M.B.Akhundzada. At that time, we need to speak about political identity of M.F.Akhundzada. Actually, at the end of the article, he determined M.F.Akhundzada’s political identity in his own way. It will be talked further.

In the article there is a serious objection against soviet political ideology presenting M.F.Akhundzada as “a supporter of Russian culture”. Rejecting this thought M.B.Mahammadzada wrote that in neither of his works including his ode dedicated to Pushkin M.F.Akhundov reminded “Russian literature”, “Russian culture” and showed “no admiration for Russians” (3, 8). Of course, political system used the personality of M.F.Akhundzada abundantly for conjecture purposes. In Soviet period the social-scientific movement founded by M.F.Akhundzada rejecting Arabian graphic alphabet was very often offended, and with transition to Cyrillic alphabet an ugly policy was conducted to break out the moral relation of Turkish nations in the USSR with Turkey. M.F.Akhundzada’s conceptual thoughts about modernization of the society, integration of his nation to the cultural world were skillfully interpreted. For Soviet political system M.F.Akhundzada was quite good history to be acquired. Not modern, namely historical past! Emigrant researcher Abdulvahab Yurdsever paying attention to this point wrote: “This point is exact that if Mirza Fatali lived in Soviet period, he would be either shot or expelled to Siberia as the well-known Azerbaijan researcher Firudin Kocharli, poet Huseyn Javid, Ahmad Javad and other numerous great writers, intellectuals, artists and scholars” (7, 25).

However, only one poem dedicated to Pushkin is not enough for speaking about M.F.Akhundzada on the plain explaining whether he was admirer of the Russia. In M.F.Akhundzada’s literary and philosophical works, in his rich epistolary heritage integration to Europe was put forward as a serious issue. With his social-political views, thoughts on society M.F.Akhundzada were close to Western philosophers and writers. He had deep knowledge on creativity of Volter, Montesquieu, Russo, Duma, Fenelon, Bokl, Shakespeare, Volney and others the names of whom he reminded in his works not once. In his outlook A.S.Pushkin was the founder of new-period Russian literature, a great poet gained love of the nation and he did not devote the ode to his death as “an admiration to Russia”. Again we share A.Yurdsever’s attitude in regard to this issue: “The writers as Pushkin and Lev Tolstoy are highly evaluated in the world culture. Everybody reads them in different languages and approves their literary genius. Our admiration for them is not because they are Russians or belong to Russian culture, but because they described the human life and soul masterfully leaving immortal works behind them.” (7, 26).

M.B.Mahammadzada in his article reminded three plays by M.F.Akhundzada and tried to clarify the aim of the author in them, however, could not demonstrate a right approach. In a word, in a concrete case he could not manage to clarify the



problem of author's position. Perhaps, here also his own political view, his personal attitude to Russian governance, Russian law hindered him to find out the idea of the work correctly.

For example, according to him, M.F.Akhundzada in his work "Hekayeti-khirs guldurbasan" described Russian government as a patron of smuggling and robbery (3, 8). Actually, M.F.Akhundzada's aim was not to reveal Russian governance. The author wanted to educate his countrymen who were supporters of old traditions by showing them in funny situations and it is an issue arising from his enlightening aesthetics.

At the end of the work Divanbeyi's speech who forgives Tanriverdi fully fits with the goal of the author: "Hey, people, let it be a lesson for you! It is high time for you to believe that you are not a wild tribe. It is a shame for you to join such evil work. Stop being engaged in theft, slyness!" (12, 98). Divanbeyi's final words were not more than "a green light" for M.F.Akhundzada to pass the censorship: "Do you know how much does the Russian government favor you and from what troubles protects? (12, 98) Or in the article M.B.Mahammadzada's thought on M.F.Akhundzada's another comedy did not fit the situation in a concrete case: "Mirza Fatali in his play "Vaziri-khani-Sarab" showed that no matter how liberal is the king, he will never be a reformist" (3, 8). However, in that comedy no issues related with a liberal king, reformism and other of such kind were put forward. Although differences in topics in all comedies M.F.Akhundzada speaks as an enlightener. Prominent literary critic Y.Garayev is fully right from this point of view: "In all "Tamsilat" the main aesthetic idea and literary ideal, as well as the outlook carry educational characteristics" (16, 230). According to M.B.Mahammadzada, M.F.Akhundzada in his literary works revealed Russian governance because he had not put up with colonialist policy of Russia in the region and considered him an enemy. In fact, with this conclusion M.B.Mahammadzada put forward political identity of the writer: "Azerbaijani Turk Mirza Fatali who struggled against the servitude discipline which Russians tried to make Azerbaijan adopt had a hatred against Russian governance, the symbol of ignorance... Mirza Fatali was against Russian governance and Russian social-political order, he was calling for a rebel against this regime." (3, 8). To my opinion, here the issue of M.F.Akhundzada's attitude to political system was made a bit severer, and was given in a very acute form. At least, it is possible to have a dispute on the last sentence. M.F.Akhundzada in the biography which he had written himself openly stated that the Caucasian governor-generals always respected him: " Since that date (since 1834 – Sh.M.) I am working in the position of a translator of Eastern languages at the Caucasian viceroys. They have always showed their respect and favor for me. I live in a welfare. I have had a rank of colonel. I am especially satisfied with the decent general-field marshal, knyaz Vorontsov, who had been my employer before Baron Rozen..." (15, 268). If to recall M.F.Akhundzada's orders and medals awarded to him by the government, the issue will be even more clarified. So, the claims about M.F.Akhundzada's hostile position against Russian political regime have no ground. But it does not mean that

M.F.Akhundzada was a supporter of the colonial regime under which his nation was. M.F.Akhundzada did his best for modernization of the nation he belonged to, for its achieving the culture and prosperity as the European nations prepared conceptual basis of integration to Europe.

So, we can note that in spite of certain contradictive and disputable points, M.B.Mahammadzada's articles on M.F.Akhundov's life and creativity although written approximately seventy years ago, preserve their significance and scientific value. There is a serious necessity for publication of M.B.Mahammadzada's both these articles and his other works which he wrote during emigration in Azerbaijan.

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## From Parallels to Intersections: A Commentary on Moin's Marlowe (in Three Acts)

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### Abstract

As I begin this response to Azfar Moin's wonderful essay, I find myself at a perplexing disadvantage. My first instinct, as a historian of the Ottoman Empire, is naturally to offer an "Ottoman perspective" on the questions he raises. Yet in reading Moin's piece, I note that he has cited the arguments of my own book as a reason for leaving the Ottomans entirely out of his story. How could I possibly protest, when to do so would mean that I disagree only with myself? Nevertheless I shall try—not necessarily to prove that I am wrong (although I must be!) but simply to explore the many ways in which Moin's essay, when refracted through an Ottoman lens, presents an even more surprising and colorful spectrum of possibilities. In doing so, I shall present my comments in three acts, thereby following Moin's lead in channeling the spirit of the great dramatist Marlowe.

### Act I: A Tale of Two Conquerors

In keeping with the theme of "strange parallels," let me start with the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II, a.k.a. "the Conqueror" (d. 1481), a man who lived more than a century before the Mughal Emperor Akbar, yet occupied a similar place in the history of his state. Like Akbar, Mehmed was not the founder of his dynasty, but was widely credited with transforming his precarious inheritance into a bona fide world empire. Like Akbar, Mehmed was a fearsomely autocratic ruler, so contemptuous of organized religion that his own son once suggested he had "never believed in Mohammed." Like Akbar, Mehmed was drawn by these autocratic impulses to a fascination with Hermetic magic and messianic kingship. And like Akbar, Mehmed even held a special

fondness for the Virgin Mary, going so far as to commission a devotional icon of the Virgin and Child from the renowned Venetian painter Gentile Bellini.[1]

Unlike Akbar, Mehmed did not extend his reverence for the Virgin to Akbar's ancestor Timur. Quite to the contrary, Timur was perhaps the most reviled figure in all of Ottoman history, having subjected Mehmed's great-grandfather Bayezid I (a.k.a. "the Thunderbolt") to such a resounding defeat that his downfall would echo through the centuries, eventually finding its way straight into the plot of *Tamburlaine the Great*. In Marlowe's retelling of the tale, which constitutes a central part of the drama in Part One of his two-part play, Bayezid's battlefield defeat is followed by a lengthy imprisonment, during which Timur feeds him scraps and drags him around on all fours to be used as a footstool. Eventually, the humiliation is so overwhelming that Bayezid is driven to suicide, a feat he accomplishes on stage by repeatedly bashing his head against the bars of his cage.

Just how closely this version of events corresponds to the fate of the historical Bayezid remains the subject of some debate. But that Mehmed's great-grandfather was defeated, captured, and humiliated by Timur was certainly not in doubt, meaning that the idea of openly emulating Timur as a model of messianic kingship was simply out of the question.[2] Fortunately for Mehmed, he had a perfectly viable alternative in the figure of Alexander the Great, a ruler who stood, in the political imaginary of the time, as the original "Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction," the magus/conqueror par excellence of whom Timur could be only a pale imitation.

#### Act II: I Am Your Father

To be sure, the idea of Alexander the Great as "Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction" is likely to come as a surprise to those more familiar with the "textbook" version of Alexander, a man celebrated for his extraordinary charisma, his martial genius, and his determination to spread the seeds of Hellenic civilization across Asia, but otherwise a thoroughly human figure. While this historical Alexander was not unknown to the Ottomans of Mehmed's day, by the fifteenth century he had been long overshadowed by a literary Alexander, a very different kind of hero who figured as protagonist of the so-called "Alexandrian Romance." This "romance" was in fact a work of epic poetry, originally composed in Greek in late antique Egypt, that was only very loosely based on Alexander's historical biography. It became an inordinately popular work, and was subsequently translated into Syriac, then Arabic, and eventually into dozens of other languages as it travelled across Eurasia, being continually reinterpreted and transformed along the way.[3]

Far more than a simple literary phenomenon, it was by means of these variegated and interrelated poetic adaptations of Alexander's life that Alexander himself would become a vehicle for exploring questions of magic, messianic kingship, and political legitimacy in an explicitly Hermetic vein. In the original Greek version of the Romance, Alexander is portrayed as the illegitimate son of Nektanabo, the great Magus/Pharaoh of Egypt who had seduced and impregnated Alexander's mother by impersonating the

god Ammon. Unaware of this connection, the young Alexander travels to Egypt to be trained by Nektanabo in the science of the stars, and—in a clear foretelling of the story of Darth Vader and his son Luke—learns of their true relationship only at the hour of Nektanabo's death, after Alexander has mortally wounded him for practicing black magic. It is after this discovery that Alexander lays claim to the crown of Egypt, rendering his conquest a legitimate claiming of his birthright. Even more importantly, because he subsequently rules with white magic rather than his father's sorcery, it is through this conquest, and his later triumphs in Asia, that the ideal of the Hermetic magus as universal sovereign is finally realized.[4]

This particular version of Alexander's story seems to have been first written down in the fourth century C.E., with various Syriac and then Arabic adaptations from the original Greek circulating widely in subsequent centuries. Eventually, these spawned an entirely separate genre of Hermetic writing that flourished throughout the early centuries of Islam, portraying Alexander as a master alchemist and astrologer governing through the magical guidance of his sage/vizier Aristotle.[5] Fragments of this tradition even made their way into the pages of the Qur'an, where the figure of Zu'l-Qarneyn, or Alexander "of the Two Horns," conquers the civilized world and then builds an enormous wall to protect it from Gog and Magog, the two barbarian peoples of the apocalypse. And still another series of related adaptations in Persian form the basis for the depiction of Alexander in Ferdowsi's *Shahnama* or "Book of Kings," the national epic of medieval Iran (and, to a significant extent, the primary literary reference point for later Ottoman and Mughal high culture as well).[6]

Of course, the parallel existence of so many different manifestations of Alexander, each shifting form and melding into one another like quicksilver, is itself a quintessentially Hermetic idea. And while a modern reader might be driven to exasperation by the impossibility of separating out and making sense of each individual strand, for a ruler like Mehmed it was precisely the possibility of presenting oneself as all of these different Alexandrian personae at the very same time that was a crucial part of the attraction. This can be understood quite clearly from the list of books about Alexander that Mehmed, a renowned bibliophile, commissioned or acquired during his reign. Among the most prominent titles, for example, we find a fine illuminated copy of the Greek Alexander romance, several versions of the Persian Alexandrian epics, and two "Alexandrian" biographies of Mehmed himself: the first a Turkish-language work comparing him to the Qur'anic Alexander, and the second a text in neoclassical Greek in which Mehmed is eulogized through comparisons with the historical Alexander. Mehmed also owned a copy of Arrian's *Anabasis* (the standard Hellenistic biography of Alexander's life), and several works of Arabic philosophy based on dialogues between Alexander and Aristotle, as well as a great many titles on Hermetic esoterica, magic, prognostication, alchemy and astrology in both Arabic and Greek. For good measure, he even commissioned an anthology, in



Arabic translation, of writings by the Renaissance neo-Pagan Platonic philosopher Georgios Gemistos Plethon (d. 1452).[7]

None of this Alexandrian eclecticism makes any sense unless we realize that Mehmed, much like his Mughal counterpart Akbar, was a monarch deeply invested in the project of using millennial kingship to “raise the body of the king above the distinctions of religion,” to use Moin’s very apt description. For just as Akbar, a nominal Muslim, ruled over a vast and fractious realm in which Muslims constituted only a small minority, Mehmed too inherited an equally fractious sultanate, the subjects of which were overwhelmingly Christian. Moreover, Mehmed’s actions throughout his reign were a far cry from his reputation, forged in much later popular portrayals of his rule, as a zealous and pious “Warrior of the Faith.” His signature military achievement, for example, the conquest of Constantinople, was achieved over the objections of his madrasa-trained grand vizier (whom Mehmed promptly executed). His subsequent decision to make Constantinople his new capital was a slap in the face of his Turkish gazis, who had expected him instead to raze it to the ground. And his policy of repopulating the city with Greeks, and financing its reconstruction by seizing the assets of Muslim pious endowments, was an affront to Muslim sensibilities for which he would never be forgiven.[8]

For all these reasons, and many others, Mehmed knew that if he was to survive and prosper on his throne he would need something more powerful, more pliable, and more ecumenical than mere religion to justify his rule. Alexander offered him just such an alternative, by presenting a model of ideal rulership that allowed him to be many things to many people: a defender of classical Hellenism for the Greek-speaking bureaucrats of his new capital, a Qur’anic prophet for the Muslim gazis of his army, a paragon of justice and eloquence for the Persian-speaking literati of his court, and above all, “Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction,” a millennial sovereign who ruled not merely through birthright, custom, or piety but rather by channeling the awesome power of the stars.

Act III: Back to England, by Way of Calabria

So what does all of this have to do with Christopher Marlowe? First, it is a very long-winded way of agreeing with Moin’s argument regarding the magical undercurrents in Tamburlaine the Great, and the importance of understanding them not merely as literary abstractions but as ideas that had very real political currency in the early modern world. Yet at the same time, it is an equally long-winded way of disagreeing with the second part of Moin’s argument, namely that Marlowe “could not have used a European figure for his play because none existed in living memory.”

I say this not simply because, for Marlowe, Mehmed the Conqueror would have been a figure less remote in time than Timur, or less remote in space than Akbar. Rather, what makes Mehmed important is the fact that his reign was only the beginning of a much longer history of Ottoman millennial kingship. If anything, his grandson Selim “the Grim” (d. 1520) and his great-grandson Suleyman “the



Magnificent" (d. 1566) were even more creatively invested in presenting themselves as Alexandrian "Lords of the Auspicious Conjunction." [9] And the same could be said of Suleyman's grandson Murad III (d. 1595), who made himself famous by attempting to harness the power of the stars through the construction of a magnificent astronomical observatory in Istanbul—the largest such enterprise since the celebrated Samarkand observatory (built, by no means coincidentally, by the grandson of Timur).[10]

The example of Murad is especially relevant because it was he who occupied the Ottoman throne in 1587, the year Christopher Marlowe penned *Tamburlaine the Great*. By that time, the rule of Murad's dynasty extended over roughly a quarter of Europe—the only portion of the continent in which Muslims, Jews, and various denominations of Christians could all peacefully serve as subjects of the same sovereign. By contrast, England in the same year was living one of the darkest moments of its religious and political history, bitterly divided against itself following the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, and awaiting the inevitable invasion by sea of the Armada of the "Most Catholic" King Philip II of Spain.

Under such circumstances, it was entirely to be expected that a radical free thinker such as Marlowe would survey the grim political landscape of his native land and yearn for a different kind of ruler, one who could rise above the petty distinctions of scripture and its dreary political corollaries: inquisitions, excommunications, religious wars, edicts of expulsion, St. Bartholomew's Day Massacres, and so forth. But in searching for such an alternative, we must take care not to imagine that he necessarily had to probe the farthest reaches of the "exposed zone," or embark on a journey of the mind to a long-lost Turco-Mongol court, in order to find a political system that was sufficiently different from the "hemmed-in monarchies" of Western Europe. Instead, to find an example of a ruler powerful enough not to insist on the religious conformity of his subjects, who sat on the throne of universal monarchy as "Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction," Marlowe needed to travel no farther than the Danube.

And yet, as natural as it may have been to consider in private that the Ottoman system was a cure for Western Christendom's collective ills, to say so in public was another matter entirely, best undertaken only by those willing to pay the ultimate price. To understand the grave risks inherent in such an undertaking, one need only look to the figure of Tommaso Campanella, one of the last and arguably the greatest of all Renaissance Hermetic philosophers, and a man born just four years Marlowe's junior in the hills of southern Italy.

Today, Campanella is famous first and foremost for *The City of the Sun*, his vision of a perfect society governed in accordance with the "Great Legislators" Jesus, Moses, Osiris, Jove, Mercury, and Mohammed under the guidance of a Sun King.[11] Yet while this is a text typically studied as a work of Utopian philosophy, the ideas it contains reflect a life of extreme political activism rather than ivory tower abstraction. In fact, by his early twenties, Campanella's ideas were already provocative enough to warrant his first serious encounter with the inside of a jail. And by 1599, at the age of

30, he became the ideologue of a radical anti-monarchical rebellion in his native Calabria. The stated goals of the uprising were remarkable: to overthrow Spanish rule with help from the Ottoman fleet, and then to declare an independent Calabrian Republic with the Ottoman Sultan as its protector (for which a rough precedent already existed in the city-state of Dubrovnik).

Sadly for Campanella, the insurrection was discovered almost before it had begun. Betrayed by two of his co-conspirators, Campanella was arrested, put on trial, and declared insane for his beliefs (the only realistic alternative to execution for sedition). He would spend the next twenty-seven years in confinement, where he wrote *The City of the Sun* while continuing to practice magic from his cell.[12]

Might Campanella's downfall have served as a warning to Marlowe, as he took up his pen and began to formulate an equally radical set of ideas? Since the Calabrian uprising did not take place until after Marlowe's death, and the two are not believed to have ever directly crossed paths, the simple answer is no. But neither Campanella's ideas nor the heavy price he paid for expressing them were by any means unique in late sixteenth-century Europe.[13] And by recognizing this reality, we can gain insight into the possible reasons why Marlowe, however daring he may have been as a dramatist, might still have preferred to use the Ottoman dynasty's long-dead antagonist Timur—rather than the Ottoman sultan himself—as the ostensible vessel for his Renaissance Magus.

But scratch just beneath the surface of Marlowe's great play, and compare the deeds of its idiosyncratic characters with the actual historical record, and one cannot help but wonder if the inconsistencies that emerge are intended to be obvious, inviting us to second guess the author's true sympathies. How else to explain Marlowe's depiction of Tamburlaine as the son of a humble shepherd, and Bayezid as a blue-blooded sultan, when in reality it was Timur who was of the more exalted lineage? How else to explain his portrayal of Tamburlaine as the "Scourge of God" and the burner of Qur'ans, when the real Timur was acclaimed as "the Sword of Islam" even by Bayezid's soldiers? Finally, and most suggestively, how to explain the basic narrative confusion of Tamburlaine's conquests when compared to the historical record? For unlike Marlowe's stage hero, the real Timur never conquered Egypt, nor did he ever do battle with the Emperor of Persia. Instead, it was Alexander the Great who did those things. Until, nearly two thousand years later, the Ottoman sultans would follow in his footsteps.

#### Epilogue

Having by now presented my "Ottoman Perspective" in sufficiently cantankerous detail, let me conclude on an altogether different note, by emphatically agreeing with Moin's basic point that the kinds of connections explored in his essay are as fundamentally important as they are pathetically understudied. In fact, it is no exaggeration to say that almost none of what I have written in the pages above would have ever even occurred to me had I not recently read Moin's magnificent book, *The*

Millennial Sovereign. And so, if I began this excursion perplexed to find my own book used against me, it is in a much different spirit—one of admiration and deep intellectual debt—that I hope to have given back to Moin a small dose of his own magical medicine.

#### Notes

The standard work on Mehmed's life is still Franz Babinger's (now very outdated) *Mehmed the Conqueror and his Time*, translated by Ralph Manheim (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978). On Mehmed's interest in the Virgin Mary, and his son's suspicions regarding his religious beliefs, see Julian Raby, "A Sultan of Paradox: Mehmed the Conqueror as Patron of the Arts," *Oxford Art Journal* 5(1) (1982): 3–8. ♣

On Bayezid's demise and its complicated aftermath, see Dimitris Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid: Empire Building and Representation in the Ottoman Civil War, 1402–23* (Leiden: Brill, 2007). ♣

In addition to the works of Subrahmanyam and Ng already cited by Moin, see Richard Stoneman, *Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2010). ♣

For an English translation of the Greek text, see Richard Stoneman, *The Greek Alexander Romance* (London: Penguin Books, 1981). ♣

For a translation of one of the most influential medieval texts in this genre, see *Book of the Treasure of Alexander: Ancient Hermetic Alchemy and Astrology*, ed. Christopher Warnok, trans. Nicholaj de Mattos Frisvold (Washington D.C.: Lulu.com, 2010). ♣

For an overview of Alexander as depicted in the Qur'an and the literature of Iran, see A. Abel, "Iskandar-nama," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 4 (Leiden: Brill, 2002). For the most important Ottoman adaptation of the medieval Persian epic, penned in the early fifteenth century, see *İskendernâme'den Seçmeler*, ed. Yasar Akdoğan (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 2000). ♣

For an overview of these works and a discussion of Mehmed's larger pattern of patronage, see Julian Raby, "Mehmed the Conqueror's Greek Scriptorium," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 37 (1983): 15–34; and Gülru Necipoğlu, "Visual Cosmopolitanism and Creative Translation: Artistic Conversations with Renaissance Italy in Mehmed II's Constantinople," *Muqarnas* 29 (2012): 1–81. For a detailed study of the Greek illuminated manuscript (whose pictures were re-glossed with Turkish captions), see Dimitris Kastritsis, "The Trebizond Alexander Romance (Venice Hellenic Institute Codex Gr.5): The Ottoman Fate of a 14th-Century Illustrated Byzantine Manuscript," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 36 (2011): 103–31. ♣

For an introduction to Mehmed's policies, see the classic study of Halil İnalcık, "The Policy of Mehmed the Conqueror toward the Greek Population of Istanbul and the Byzantine Buildings of the City," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 23–24 (1969–1970): 231–49. ♣

See Cornell Fleischer, "The Lawgiver as Messiah: The Making of the Imperial Image in the Reign of Süleymân," in *Soliman le magnifique et son temps*, ed. Gilles Veinstein (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1992), 159–77. ↗

On Murad's observatory, see Baki Tezcan, "Some Thoughts on the Politics of Early Modern Ottoman Science," in *Beyond Dominant Paradigms in Ottoman and Middle Eastern/North African Studies: A Tribute to Rifa'at Abou-El-Haj*, ed. Donald Quataert and Baki Tezcan (Istanbul: İSAM, 2010), 135–56. ↗

Tommaso Campanella, *La Città del Sole: Dialogo Politico/The City of the Sun: Political Dialogue*, trans. Daniel John Donno (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981). ↗

For a study of Campanella's life and works, see John M. Headly, *Tommaso Campanella and the Transformation of the World* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997). ↗

For another roughly contemporary hermetic thinker, similarly declared insane and sentenced to decades of confinement for, among other things, having too many complimentary things to say about the Ottomans, see Marion L. Kuntz, *Guillaume Postel, Prophet of the Restitution of All Things: His Life and Thought* (London: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981). ↗

## Commentary on Moin: Eurasian History, Comparative Literature, Haptology

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### Abstract

Anglophone instead of English literature). Moin explicitly draws on Victor Lieberman's historical-political unit of an expanded Eurasia, which distinguishes mainland regions historically exposed to the perennial invasions of Inner Asian nomads from the protected "rimlands." However, Moin's own units of comparison (Marlowe's Tamburlaine and Akbar's Jesus) assume—for want of a better characterization—a New Historicist textualization of culture that blurs the boundaries between literary/visual representations and historical events. His "strange parallel" is between a play and an emperor's self-fashioning, a staged representation of sovereignty and the "theater of sovereignty" itself. In Moin's account, Marlowe found in Tamburlaine (Timur), and his living descendent Akbar, the inspiration for the Renaissance Magus (ideal man) who transcended organized religion; during the same decades, Akbar embraced messianic Jesus in the tradition of heroic epics of Inner Asian kings to present himself as the most sacred being on earth, above the distinctions of religion. Moin thus engages Lieberman's historical model both to affirm the distinction between the protected zone of Marlowe's Elizabethan England and the exposed zone of Akbar's Mughal India, as well as to explain the strange coincidence of an English playwright and an Indian emperor's respective uses of Timur. As far-flung but synchronic events/representations, they attest to a variegated early modern Eurasian "political imagination" of Inner Asian kingship.

The sharp end of the stake here is in "worlding" English literature using a panoramic paradigm of Eurasian history. In this context, the paper initially brought to mind Littleton and Malcour's *From Scythia to Camelot*, which traces elements of the King Arthur tales to the epics of Alan and Sarmatian steppe peoples of the first millennium BCE.[1] However, unlike Littleton and Malcour (or studies of parallels in Indic and Greek epic, say), who explore the transmission of the Inner Asian heroic epics themselves, Moin argues that circulating myths of Timur influenced Marlowe and Akbar both. Littleton and Malcour's work also reaches back much further in time than Lieberman's early modern period of Eurasian integration (800–1824 C.E.). Since China, at the other exposed end of the Eurasian continent, also had a rich pre- and

post-800 C.E. literary archive of Inner Asian kingship (e.g., Sima Qian's [?145–?86 B.C.E.] *Records of the Grand Historian*, Wei Shou's [506–572 C.E.] *History of the Wei Dynasty*), one might further explore the chronological and regional possibilities of Lieberman's historical paradigm for literary studies.[2]

More importantly, Moin's article raises a broader question concerning the use of world historical paradigms—and Eurasian or Central Asian history in particular—in literary studies. By literary studies, I loosely refer here to the whole lumpen mass of practices and theories (classical philology, cultural studies, etc.) associated with the term in the US academy, many of which are of course already part of the repertoire of the historian. Moin's paper prompts us to ask what studies of representation and meaning can do for, or to, large-scale social science models such as Lieberman's. Central Eurasian literary cultures have not become "universalized" in critical theory in the way that, say, Renaissance England has in New Historicism or British India has in postcolonial theory. Central Asia has, however, become the paradigm-shifting element in an array of historical studies that includes Lieberman's recent *Strange Parallels*. I'll briefly address these other historical templates—the world system and the Silk Road respectively—in an effort to give Moin's use of Lieberman some context. I should clarify that what follows is a very preliminary sketch of potential methods of bringing modernity-centered comparative literature (the incohesive tradition to which I belong) into conversation with the kind of work Moin is doing.

Lieberman's template of world history, which makes regional vulnerability to nomadic invasions the key to the historical development of two types of political formations, provides a base (as it were) to the superstructure of the cultural and literary forms that Moin tracks. Compare this to the issues raised by literary scholar Franco Moretti's influential use of world history. Moretti differentiates two world literatures: an internally diverse *Weltliteratur* shaped by a "mosaic of separate, 'local' cultures" prior to the eighteenth century; and our increasingly homogeneous world literary system "unified by the international literary market" since the eighteenth century.[3] This latter world literary system is grounded in the political-economic model of the modern capitalist world system, and Moretti promotes a mode of distant reading modeled on the reading practices of world systems analysis (e.g. synthesizing the works of national literature specialists). In the context of Moin and Lieberman, one should note that Moretti's world systems analysts of choice are Immanuel Wallerstein and Fernand Braudel, and not Andre Gunder Frank or Barry Gills, who push the world system back five thousand years from the present, or Janet Abu-Lughod, who traces several successive world systems back to the thirteenth century.[4] Frank, Gills, and Lughod all revise Wallerstein's Europe-centered paradigm by making Eurasia (and at times China) the heartland of world history. Adopting an older world systems model in which Eurasia is the center wouldn't necessarily affect Moretti's essential point about the effects of the modern global literary market (e.g. homogenization, the travel of plot versus style). However, it highlights the perennial role of pre-modern literature



as modern literature's foil in critical theory, and the need for a greater awareness of ongoing debates over the historiography of pre-modernity. If large swathes of the pre-modern world did not comprise a mosaic of separate local cultures, which historical template should pre-modern literary scholars turn toward to make connections? Is the kind of long-distance connective work that Moin is doing best restricted to Lieberman's period (c. 800–1830) and paradigm? What kinds of comparative projects are enabled by arguments made by Central Asian scholars that push the Eurasian *oikoumene* back further to antiquity and even to prehistoric times?

Before turning to the Silk Road template, one might note Gayatri Spivak's proposal for a new comparative literature, which entails a critique of the world systems equation of economic with cultural systems ("literature is what escapes the system; you cannot speed read it").[5] Although this is specific to the economic world system, Moin's use of Lieberman's political paradigm at times tends towards over-determination (for example, in the claim that England could only represent Inner Asian kingship on stage because it was in the protected zone while India in the exposed zone could stage it as a political reality). Interestingly, Spivak (like Moretti) uses pre-modernity as a foil, but as an inspirational one. The "planetarity" that she proposes (in place of "global" thinking) focuses on cultures within cultures, and demographic movements between the predetermined regions of modern Area Studies. She argues that this perspective is best imagined from the pre-capitalist, and pre-continental cultures of the planet.

The Silk Road template—like Frank, Gills, and Abu-Lughod's world systems—takes the problem of contact (and non-contact) further back in time than Lieberman's *Strange Parallels*. As much a metaphor as a model of history, the term Silk Road has headlined exhibitions, performances, interdisciplinary academic conferences, as well as diplomatic and oil pipeline projects. Christopher Beckwith's recent *Silk Road Empires* defines the Silk Road as "the entire Central Eurasian economy, or socio-economic-political-cultural system, the great flourishing of which impressed itself upon the people of antiquity and the Middle Ages." [6] Like Lieberman's *Strange Parallels*, Beckwith remakes Central Eurasian pastoral nomads as the key political agents, rather than the mere middleman of an interconnected world history. For Beckwith, the Silk Road begins with Indo-European migrations four millennia ago and ends with the conquest of Central Eurasia by peripheral Russian and Qing empires in the seventeenth century. Valerie Hansen's *The Silk Road: A New History* serves as a useful revisionist contrast to Liebermann and Beckwith (and world system analyses), inasmuch as she argues the profound importance of Central Asian trade networks not in directly transforming world political and economic history, but in becoming "the planet's most famous cultural artery for the exchange between east and west of religions, art, languages, and new technologies." [7] The Silk Road, loosely defined by Hansen as "the overland routes leading west out of China through Central Asia to Syria and beyond" especially during the 200–1000 CE period, was "one of the least traveled routes in human history" and bore insignificant quantities of trade goods.

However, it transformed the world precisely by transmitting unfamiliar ideas, technology, and artistic motifs. Hansen is not interested in the politics of representation in the way that Moin is, but this historical template of Silk Road exchange has an open-endedness that privileges local movements for those who might want to make literary connections between far-flung places in the absence of narratives of conquest or inter-regional political and economic integration. In this model, the quantitatively insignificant can become significant within cultural, religious, or technological history. Although Hansen does not make this claim, what constitutes a Silk Road “event” becomes open to rethinking.

We need more of what I would call haptographies like Moin’s. “Haptography” (haptomai, “I touch”; graphō, “I write”; i.e., “writing about contact”) refers both to the archive of contact and exchange—for example, travel narratives, bilingual inscriptions, buried exotica—and studies of contact. Haptography demands certain styles of looking, reading, and writing; it invites a re-examination of the canon, an excavation of new texts, a novel juxtaposition with a different set of maps in mind. Haptography is supplementary and interdisciplinary—it is meant to aid, not replace, other modes of reading and research. Since haptography, like ethnography and other disciplines, necessarily forms in advance its subject of inquiry (here, contact), we also need critical “haptologies” (discourses or theories of contact) that clarify the diverse possibilities and limits of defining and describing contact and exchange (and their absence), and that make visible our geo-historical unconscious, whether in terms of Lieberman’s strange parallels, Sanjay Subrahmayan’s connected histories, Lydia Liu’s trans-lingual practices, Mary Louise Pratt’s trans-culturalism, Spivak’s planetarity, Leela Gandhi’s affective communities, Henry Louis Gates’ signifying, or Nicola Di Cosmo’s frontier contexts.

Pre-modern sites of haptography and haptology already include ancient Greece, the Levant, and the Mediterranean (e.g., Bernal’s *Black Athena*, Burkert’s *Orientalizing Revolution*, Horden and Purcell’s *The Corrupting Sea*) and medieval China (e.g. Mair’s *Painting and Performance*, Kieschnick’s *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture*, *Dunhuangology*), i.e., contexts of large-scale cultural inheritance.[8] However, one doesn’t necessarily need an account of wholesale cultural transformation or imperial conquest, or even a strong theory of pre-modern world systems to explore long-distance literary and cultural connections or resonances. Globalization and perennial nomadic conquest are but two haptologies. One might also, as in the case of Moin’s (protected zone) approach to Marlowe or Hansen’s Silk Road, pursue “minor” haptographies. These scattered, fragmented and ostensibly inconsequential connections may not at first add up to much on the quantitative and democratic scales of political and economic history. However, this is precisely where the more speculative labors of the literary scholar might be used to unpack the significance of far-flung haptic imaginaries for the past as well as the present. (Such

minor pursuits may even lead us away from the longstanding politics of “influence,” or, who did what and where, first.)

Finally, the haptologist will have to ask what is particular about panoramic studies of Eurasia (Inner Asian nomadic conquests? Silk Road transfers?) in comparison to, say, circum-Atlantic studies, Pacific studies, Mediterranean or Black Sea studies, or thassalographies more broadly? How have the archives of Central Asian history lent themselves to some disciplines better than others (e.g., art history versus literature)? Why might the case of pre-modern Eurasia exemplify the need to enlarge “literature” to include a spectrum of oral, written, visual, non-canonical and canonical materials?[9] Bids to take seriously the centrality of Central Asia within world history go back at least as far as the nineteenth century. The colonial geographer Baron Ferdinand von Richthofen coined the term Silk Road in 1877 in his historical surveys of ancient and medieval transcontinental trade from China that he used to map out the path for future railway commerce between China and Europe.[10] Halford Mackinder’s “The Geographical Pivot of History” (1904) made Eurasia the “Heartland” of much of world history as well as the Great Game imperial rivalries of his day.[11] A critical haptologist will thus, like the new philologist or self-reflexive ethnographer, have to ask: what are the political, institutional, and psychic desires shaping this effort to introduce or universalize the panoramic Afro-Eurasian perspective? Similarly, Spivak’s close-reader or Pollock’s philologist will have not only to consider the peripheries and the (often quantitatively insignificant) long-distance connections, but also the model of historical contact or non-contact at play.[12]

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19. Sheldon Pollock's "Future Philology? The Fate of a Soft Science in a Hard World," *Critical Inquiry* 35(4) (Summer 2009): 934, defines philology as "the discipline of making sense of texts." As with Spivak's close reading, the texts at stake are written texts that must be read in the original. ♣



## The Ghosts of Monotheism: Heaven, Fortune, and Universalism in Early Chinese and Greco-Roman Historiography

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**Abstract:** This essay analyzes the creation of the empires of Rome over the Mediterranean and of the Han dynasty over the Central Plains between the third and the second centuries BCE. It focuses on the historiographical oeuvres of Polybius and Sima Qian, as the two men tried to make sense of the unification of the world as they knew it. The essay does away with the subsequent methodological and conceptual biases introduced by interpreters who approached the material from the vantage point of Abrahamic religions, according to which transcendent personal entities could favor the foundation of unitary political and moral systems. By considering the impact of the different contexts and of the two authors' subjective experiences, the essay tries to ascertain the extent to which Polybius and Sima Qian tended to associate unified rule with the triumph of universal values and the establishment of superior, divine justice.

All profound changes in consciousness, by their very nature, bring with them characteristic amnesias. Out of such oblivions, in specific historical circumstances, spring narratives. —Benedict Anderson[1]

The nation as the subject of History is never able to completely bridge the aporia between the past and the present. —Prasenjit Duara[2]

Any structure is the ingenuous re-proposition of a hidden god; any systemic approach might actually constitute a crypto-theology. —Benedetto Croce[3]

Introduction: Monotheism, Systemic Unities, and Ethnocentrism



Scholars who engage in comparisons are often wary of the ethnocentric biases that lurk behind their endeavors. Seldom do interdisciplinary works historicize the concept of religion, tending instead toward interpretations rooted in monotheistic, Abrahamic terms, as well as classifications of religion as an unproblematically universal category.[4] In his final attempt at writing a universal religious history, the late Robert Bellah (1927–2013) programmatically adopted Émile Durkheim's (1858–1917) structuralist interpretation: "Religion is a system of beliefs and practices relative to the sacred that unite those who adhere to them in a moral community." [5] For a scholar of the ancient Mediterranean and perhaps even more so for one of early China, this formulation is based on key assumptions clearly derived from Abrahamic traditions, traditions that posit religion as a totalizing experience that defines individual and collective identities in an exclusive way.[6] Consequently, such assumptions about the "sacred," or the "invisible," tend to privilege the cultural role of well-formalized ideas and beliefs over actual social practices and processes.[7] These assumptions presuppose the universality of the need to organize behaviors and notions concerning "the extra-human realm" into a coherent and unitary intellectual system. Such conceits interfere with purely historical inquiries, for they reintroduce insidious ethnocentric biases and teleological drives in pursuit of philosophical or systemic coherence.

In the post-9/11 world, the specter of a "clash of civilizations" and the urge to establish the basis for fruitful intercultural dialogues has prompted researchers to look for comprehensive views (i.e., *Weltanschauungen*) that treat civilizations as moral and ideological unities.[8] Such approaches—especially when the comparison is cultural—tend to treat religion or mankind's relationship with the supernatural as a defining element that explains collective agency. Several contemporary discussions on universalism, secularism, and neoatheism reflect this "hegemony of monotheism" insofar as they conceive of the relationships between religion, identity, and agency in systemic terms.[9] And such intellectual stances still condition the ways non-Western experiences are conceptualized. Therefore, the study of Asian and ancient Mediterranean cases (particularly those that are pre-Buddhist and pre-Christian) holds promise for emancipating intercultural exchanges from implicit ethnocentrism and promoting a truly inclusive approach.

In the West, the propensity to conceive of religion in terms of systems and exclusive identities owes much to the influence of Greek philosophical and Roman legal traditions. In pre-Christian Rome, for example, the coexistence of different customs and attitudes concerning the sacred was conceivable and accepted within the capital city, as well as throughout Italy and the provinces of the Roman empire.[10] Things began to change in the fourth century. An official notion of religion based in the Church's monopoly on interpreting scripture, defining orthodoxy, and carrying out rituals was established over the course of many negotiations, conflicts, and countless councils. The concept of religion that resulted from these cultural and political processes would be conceived of as exclusive (in that alternatives would not be

tolerated) as well as capable of explaining all phenomena and regulating all human interactions. It became progressively associated with the moral and political necessity of a unified empire. The Reformation would eventually contest this centralized view, but nonetheless reinforced the relationship between religious affiliations and moral, ethnic, and national identities. This approach is deeply rooted in the history of the Mediterranean and Europe and still broadly adopted in contemporary intercultural discourses.

Since its inception, the comparative study of religions seems to have been particularly prone to the rationalization of meta-historical assumptions of Western origin aimed at recognizing unity. This idea of unity has rarely been conceived of as a result of cultural compromise and abstraction, but rather arrived at either in terms of a common revelation or a universality of psycholinguistic structures. Frontiersmen of the field, such as Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900) and Georges Dumézil (1898–1986), trained as philologists and interested in the supposed Indo-European origins of Western civilization, sought evidence of shared psychological structures and attitudes among humans toward the sacred. Their research topics included Asia (in their case India), as it was thought to represent an earlier stage of Western civilization.[11] As for Chinese civilization, it finally became integrated in the European comparative discourse on world religions only after the work of James Legge (1815–1897). By contributing to Max Müller’s monumental editorial project on the Sacred Books of the East with his translation of the so-called “Confucian” classics, Legge allowed an international readership to acknowledge China as a civilization with its own corpus of scriptures and foundational mythology.[12] In his enormously influential translations, Legge treated Chinese myths either as imperfect renditions of biblical truths, or as fictionalized, if not simply faulty historical accounts.[13] Such an approach seems consistent with the idea that all non-monotheistic religions represented a degenerate form or misunderstood version of an original revelation.[14]

Although contemporary historians and philologists of ancient China rarely resort to the reduction of Chinese phenomena to foreign conceptions, the almost apologetic tendency to re-elaborate (or rationalize, in Weberian terms) Chinese religious or intellectual traditions in terms of systemic unities still reflects the hegemony of Western formulations.[15] In generalist and comparative works, the assumption of notions of transcendence and religion specific to the Abrahamic traditions is evident in the recent revival of the ahistorical Axial Age theory, elaborated upon by the German philosopher and psychologist, Karl Jaspers (1883–1969). The Axial Age theory posits that all the religions and philosophies of the world would reach maturity in specific ages (such as the period between the sixth and the fourth centuries BCE, for example), as the “simultaneous” and polycentric epiphany of the same revelation.[16] Jaspers suggests that discrete cultural achievements in different circumstances and places would serve the same ideas of progress and civilization. The Axial Age theory—which draws from German idealism, Jungian psychology, and Weberian sociological

analysis—offers a philosophical justification for a kind of universalism typical of the monotheistic traditions.[17] In addition, subscribers of this paradigm take religious experiences into consideration only insofar as they can be analyzed consistently by means of a systemic philosophical approach, one that underplays aspects of religious life that would not contribute to the rational development of the individual within society. Hence, the notion of universalism propounded by such a view no longer represents merely an ethical and political attitude but becomes an epistemological axiom that can seriously hamper a strictly historical approach as well as a truly inclusive intercultural attitude.

This paper takes issue with the still common tendency to reduce the concept of Tian (Heaven) in early China to “the Chinese notion of God,”[18] “supreme authority” or “sky-god,”[19] and to assume that it constantly characterized Chinese “religion” throughout history. It concentrates on the notions of “Heaven” and “Fortune” in Sima Qian’s (?145–86 BCE) *Records of the Grand Historian* (Shiji 史記 hereafter the *Records*)[20] and in Polybius’s (200–118 BCE) *Histories* as case studies on the role of meta-historical factors in accounts of the establishment of the Han and Roman unified rules.

Although the propagandistic or apologetic motives of imperial narratives, as well as the very literary structure of universal histories tend to produce teleological trajectories, the authors as well as the protagonists of these two works did not conceive of a universalistic, super-ethnic religion that propounded the unity of the metaphysical, moral, and empirical realms. Their worldview was not influenced by monotheism or by its conscious rejection. Yet it is interesting to notice that Polybius, a universal historian with a unitary view, was considered closer to Christianity than the majority of other Greek writers.[21] In contrast, Sima Qian’s work has been criticized for its lack of an explicit overarching philosophical conception.[22]

Sima Qian began his historical enterprise almost five centuries after the fall of the Western Zhou (771 BCE), the last dynasty to claim the Mandate of Heaven, and before the new power of the Han could be fully legitimized. Among several themes, the *Records* notably explores the possible relationship between political unity and cosmic harmony in a world still characterized by regional diversity and center-periphery conflicts. Polybius, a Greek citizen, instead wrote his oeuvre while trying to make sense of the unification of the Mediterranean carried out by the Romans. By placing Fortune at the center of his narrative, he was the first ancient historian to seek a unifying element before the approach of Christian historiography became hegemonic.[23] Also, by influencing Livy, and in turn Machiavelli, Polybius provided European non-confessional historiography with an argument for defining religion as *instrumentum regni* or “instrumental to power.”

This essay does not take issue with the rich scholarship on Polybius and Sima Qian, but uses its breakthroughs to enrich and complicate contemporary comparative and generalist debates on the possibility of cross-cultural dialogues. It addresses the

traditionally problematic relationship between the study of ancient history and theory by attempting to integrate textual and empirical analyses into contemporary discourses on religion, universality, and identity while preserving the specificity of the historical method. Finally, this article will seek to ascertain the ways in which the authors of both the *Records* and the *Histories*, hailing from different personal backgrounds and cultural contexts, explained the unification of the known world by asking the following questions: What role did extra-human factors play in the establishment of universal empires? Were extra-human forces intrinsically moral and working for the success of an ethnically-specific civilization, or were they “impartial” and “universal”? Did either of the two authors conceive of the existence of any universal values that transcended ethnic divides?

I submit that neither Sima Qian nor Polybius believed that empires coincided with the establishment of a superior moral order. They saw political unification in part as the result of amoral chance, the intervention of which they acknowledged in several instances through a gendered discourse on the unpredictability, elusiveness, and complementary nature of male-female interactions.

#### Universalism in the *Records*

Sima Qian and Polybius shared the dual privilege of observing and explaining the exceptional convergence of events and personalities that had enabled the establishment of a single hegemonic power over the world as they knew it. Setting them apart from each other are differing ideas regarding the relative position of each one’s own civilization vis-à-vis foreign cultures and sociopolitical traditions. While Greco-Roman historians tended to approach their subjects in comparative terms, in the *Central States*, the discourse on civilization had traditionally been self-referential.

Around and across the Mediterranean Sea, identities had developed in the awareness of the coexistence of different civilizations that represented not only challenges but also served as examples. Peoples, goods, practices, and ideas traveled through trade, diplomacy, migration, colonization, and warfare from time immemorial.[24] The proximity and the relevance of the “Other,” the foreign, the strange, and the hostile, had been fundamental in the formalization of both group and individual consciousness.[25] It would be impossible, for example, to follow the history of ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Israel without considering their composite natures and mutual connections, not forgetting the importance of cultural diffusion, and the violent impact of external forces. If we look closely at classical historiography, we see that it was out of fear and admiration for the Persian Empire that Greek city-states formalized and embraced a pan-Hellenic identity.[26] In turn, the ancient Romans constructed the idea of a distinctive national character against the cultures of Greece and the Greek colonies in southern Italy, as well as the Etruscans and the other peoples of the peninsula.[27] The analytic approach of the historians writing in and about the ancient Mediterranean tended to be comparative both in methodology and in purpose,

since they had to acknowledge the commensurable political and cultural relevance of other past and contemporary ethnic, cultural, and political realities.

In contrast, the very idea of civilization in early imperial China coincided with the peoples and customs of the Central Plains (the area of the lower reaches of the Yellow River). The ancient Chinese believed that their illiterate and savage neighbors could always be “emancipated” through sinicization.[28] Few today would overlook the import of non-autochthonous elements in Chinese culture throughout history, yet the received textual tradition represents the “Other” as an alternative to “Civilization” only in a dialectical and paradoxical way.[29] Although the *Records* addresses the negative trope of the uncivilized barbarian in critical terms, its relatively unprejudiced treatment of the Other seems more instrumental to Sima Qian’s preoccupation with the employment of competent officials in foreign politics than indicative of a genuine interest in the Other itself, as the civilization of the Central States seemed to have no conceivable alternatives.[30]

Sima Qian, born by the Yellow River, just a few miles north of the Han capital Chang’an, had always been close to the geographic and cultural center of the empire, and spent his life in the shadows of the imperial court.[31] As he recollects in the autobiographical chapter of the *Records*, members of his family had served as official historians (shi 史) ever since the semi-mythical first Chinese dynasty of the Xia (2100–1600 BCE). For centuries, the Sima had faithfully recorded human, natural, and astrological events, as all phenomena were traditionally considered intertwined with the lives of the ancient Chinese and their ruling dynasties. According to tradition, over time, royal power had shifted from the Xia, to the Shang (1600–1046 BCE), and then to the Zhou (1046–256 BCE), who eventually lost political power over the Central Plains in 771 BCE during a “barbaric” invasion that forced them eastward. The ensuing centuries, customarily divided into Spring and Autumn (until 475 BCE) and Warring States (475–221 BCE) periods, saw first the fragmentation of the Zhou realm and the rise of local centers of power, followed by the consolidation of seven major polities that vied for supremacy over the Central Plains. The state of Qin, which under the Zhou had been in charge of guarding the western borders, ultimately prevailed by defeating the powerful southern state of Chu. The Qin reunified China in 221 BCE thanks to their military superiority and iron grip on people and resources. Yet the Qin dynasty was short-lived, as its empire was proverbially ruled through fear, and the ruthless enforcement of taxes, corvées, and punishments, which angered the people and provoked several revolts and competing rebellions. Years of violent conflicts ended when Liu Bang (?256–195 BCE), a commoner from the region of the former state of Chu, defeated his aristocratic rivals and established the Han (206 BCE–220 CE), the dynasty under which Sima Qian was born and raised.

In the centuries of disunity that followed the decline of the Zhou in the eighth century BCE, several professional advisers emerged, offering contemporary leaders different political strategies and cultural models. Among them was Confucius (551–479



BCE), who extolled the Zhou as the ideal dynasty, which—he emphasized—had ruled not by imposing military control or by exploiting a privileged relation with the divine (represented by ghosts and spirits, *gui* 鬼 and *shen* 神, but by virtue of moral example and the secular *li* 禮 (a complex system of ritualized social behaviors that reinforced social distinctions and fostered a harmonious and stable society, from the elites at the top all the way down to the common people).

When the Han wiped away the violent Qin, some political and cultural elites (especially the Classicists, *ru* 儒 [32]) nurtured the hope that the new dynasty would sanction Confucius's views, which could be revived by studying his sayings as well as those works attributed to the Zhou which the Master had allegedly collected, edited, and commented on—the so-called Classics.[33] In addition, under the influence of the regional and cultural traditions of the Warring States (especially of the state of Qi), some believed that the moral rule the Han was expected to reestablish would also correspond with a new cosmic order, as dynastic power was believed to safeguard the interconnection of natural rhythms and the political institutions.

However, Liu Bang and his immediate successors hesitated before legitimizing their supremacy through unambiguous state propaganda, since semi-independent kingdoms and local centers of power continued to challenge the authority of the Han for decades after the dynasty's foundation, compelling the leaders of the new dynasty to respond with measures that, in their ruthlessness, closely resembled those used by the despised Qin.[34] It was only during Emperor Wu's reign that, with successful military campaigns at home and abroad as well as the enforcement of state monopolies, the new centralized state seemed stable and florid enough to allow for its own celebration. From a historiographical point of view, this celebration was undertaken by the court archivists Sima Tan and his son Sima Qian, who embarked in a narrative enterprise, the Records of the Grand Historian (*Shiji* 史記, the first comprehensive account of the history of Chinese civilization, from its semi-mythical origins to Emperor Wu's triumph.[35] But after five centuries of political and cultural disunion—provided that an original unity was anything more than a literary creation—to weave the histories of the Central States into a single narrative was not an obvious task. Complicating matters further was the fact that the ruling lineage of the Han did not originate from the Central Plains, the region associated with the three traditional dynasties of the Xia, Shang, and Zhou, but from the southern state of Chu.

While several individuals and factions (often representative of different local traditions of the Warring States) contended with each other at court, the Classicists (who would eventually prevail) were still far from representing a well-defined school with a generally accepted theoretical and canonical basis. Although Sima Tan and his son had both studied under teachers of different disciplines and traditions, Sima Qian clearly expressed his admiration for Confucius. However, Sima Qian considered the Master's legacy tragically interrupted; no one had yet been born who could read the cosmos and harmonize its rules with society. The present times were too corrupt to



allow for rulership informed by li and filial piety; extant historical records about the Zhou were too fragmentary and obscure for their example to be fully comprehended and reproduced.[36]

Furthermore, Sima Tan and Sima Qian's historiographical approach was inevitably conditioned by their problematic relationship with the ruler whose triumph they were expected to celebrate. As I shall argue below, Emperor Wu's political and cultural agenda was peculiar enough that neither of the two historians could have immediately comprehended or approved of it. Interestingly, when conducting the Feng and Shan sacrifices in 110 BCE, the long awaited grandiose state rituals that were supposed to epitomize the new legitimation of the Han, Emperor Wu wanted no historians to witness it. Sima Tan was unexpectedly left at home, and according to the sources, fell ill and died shortly after because of the snub. Sima Qian was excluded from the last, and most important stage of the sacrifice, while the only person who accompanied Emperor Wu, a charioteer, perished a few days later of mysterious maladies.[37]

Finally, Sima Qian's view must have been severely conditioned by the "Li Ling Affair" of 99 BCE. That year the historian tried to defend the conduct of a general who chose to save himself and his remaining troops instead of leading them on a suicide mission against the onslaught of an overwhelming enemy. Emperor Wu became so angry with Sima Qian for the apology that he imposed upon him a cruel choice, death or castration. Although extremely humiliating, the historian chose mutilation, for it would still allow him to perpetuate the glory of his family through his literary enterprise.

It should come as no surprise that Sima Qian did not believe that the unification of China meant the necessary culmination of a "divine" plan or the realization of a just order. The Grand Historian was too aware that the triumph of the Han represented the realization of selfish interests via violence and conspiracy rather than the victory of a superior moralizing will. Through individual and collective biographies, annals, chronological tables, and monographic essays, the 130 chapters of the Records account for multiple subjectivities in a multifaceted narrative that complicates the recognition of seemingly straightforward historical causation. During the numerous travels he carried out in order to verify historical and geographical circumstances, Sima Qian became acquainted with the multifarious cultures and customs of the different areas of China. Unlike his ancient Mediterranean counterparts who could conceive of different (rivaling) civilizations, for Sima Qian the only valuable standard was the one represented by the Central States. But he did not apprehend their civilization in essentialist terms. For the historian, everyone—regardless of cultural and ethnic background—could potentially embrace the superior ethical and social traditions of China. Further, Sima Qian's accounts of the Other seem self-referential in that they are mainly inspired by the didactic purpose of advising the court about pressing situations.

The Records treats the most formidable enemy of the fledging Han dynasty, the nomadic Xiongnu, as a byproduct of the Central States, for it traces their origins back to the royal family of the Xia dynasty.[38] According to the text, these nomads were related to the same extra-human forces worshipped by the Chinese. Like the Chinese, the Xiongnu sacrificed to Heaven and Earth, as well as ghosts (gui) and spirits (shen), albeit in their own ways.[39] Xiongnu society represented a diametric opposite of the Confucian ideal, for they lacked literacy, agriculture, care for the elderly, propriety (li), and righteousness (yi).[40] However, according to the Records, these nomads could also betray the flaws and disadvantages of a more sophisticated set of social rituals and etiquette. The text informs us that the royal lineage of the Xiongnu, not constrained by the overly elaborate and strict norms of propriety (li), was in fact, fairly stable and durable, as elite men could marry the widows of relatives in violation of basic Chinese incest taboos.[41] Their relationship with the extra-human, what we may call their “religion,” did not have any role in defining their identity.

As for the Otherness of the people of Chu, homeland of the founder of the Han, the Records traces their origins back to the mythical sovereign Zhuan Xu, a nephew of the ancestor to all Chinese people, the pre-dynastic Yellow Emperor. Zhuan Xu certainly did not establish a reign based on the secular social rituals and exemplary filial piety that would become Confucius’s model, for he “followed Heaven by according himself to its rhythms, prescribed norms that complied with spirits and ghosts, [and] transformed the people by controlling the Five Qi.”[42] Since the Warring States period, Chu, in spite of, or because of its relative exoticism, had become an integral part of discourses concerning the cultural traditions of the Central Plains.[43] And unsurprisingly, the Records does not hold—at least directly—that the origins of Liu Bang, founder of the Han, might constitute an obstacle to his claims to leadership over the Central States. After all, political unity was possible even without li. Furthermore, even though the Records does not seem to subscribe to a well-developed cyclical theory of the Five Factors (wuxing 五行), its authors accept the notion that different styles of rule might fit different periods and circumstances.

In the Records, China, albeit characterized by several cultural and political traditions, seems the only conceivable civilization. Neighboring peoples and foes are depicted not in terms of absolute Otherness or diversity, but inclusively as gradual digressions (due to behavior more than birth) from the established norms of the known world, since their genealogical origin is always sought within the cosmos of the Central States. And it should be noted that because of the millenary history of contacts and interdependence between Eastern and Central Asia, no peoples who clashed with the polities of the Central Plains could be considered completely alien.

#### Universalism in Polybius

For Polybius, who lived under the hegemony of foreign forces, the world had many possible centers, and civilizations, many possible forms. As pointed out by Frank W. Walbank, both Polybius’s life and oeuvre were deeply affected by “the impact of the

outside world upon Greece.”[44]Son of the eminent statesman Lycortas, Polybius was born in 203 BCE in the Arcadian city of Megalopolis, a member of the Achaean League, a confederation of Hellenic poleis whose aim was to protect Greek autonomy, especially against the intrusions of the Macedonian power.[45]The League had to confront first Sparta’s resurgence, and then the rising power of Rome.[46] Under such a threat, many had hoped that the Antigonid King Perseus of Macedon (212–166 BCE), one of the political heirs of Alexander the Great (356–323 BCE), could better safeguard Hellenic independence. But the Third Macedonian War (171–168 BCE) against Rome ended with Perseus’s total defeat. After the fatal battle of Pydna in 168, the last Antigonid ruler was deported as a hostage together with his entourage and the members of the Hellenic political groups who had supported him directly or indirectly. Among them was the historian Polybius.[47]

At the time of his exile, Polybius had already spent more than thirty years at the center of the Hellenic political scene as a young and active member of the Achaean League. In the footsteps of his father and elder brother, who had also participated in diplomatic missions to Rome, he seemed destined for an even more illustrious political career. Around the age of twenty, Polybius was chosen to accompany the urn of the beloved leader of the Achaean League, Philopoemen (253–183 BCE), during his funeral; in 170/69 BCE, at thirty—the youngest age of eligibility—Polybius was elected as Military Commander (*hipparchos*) of the Achaean League, and the position of Supreme Commander (*stratêgos*) seemed likely to be his next prestigious appointment.[48]

Yet the historian’s exile in Italy did not mean isolation from the center of political activity. Whereas his fellow countrymen and hostages were usually not allowed in the capital city, Polybius—due either to his influential acquaintances or because the host government wanted to keep an eye on him—was allowed to spend his exile in Rome. Here Polybius was welcomed in the preeminent cultural and political circles of the time. He enjoyed a relative degree of freedom, which allowed him to travel within and outside Italy and to take part in hunting expeditions. Most importantly, Polybius, in the years of his exile, became a tutor and friend of P. Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus (185–129 BCE), the military and political leader who would be forever associated with the siege and destruction of Carthage in 146 BCE (of which the historian was a direct witness) and the subsequent establishment of Rome as the paramount imperial power of the Mediterranean.[49]

After promoting a policy of “cautious Achaean independence in international affairs,” and witnessing the disbanding of the Achaean League with the destruction of Corinth by the Romans in 146 BCE, Polybius became involved in the reconstruction of Greece (he was repatriated in 150 BCE) and in the political mediation between Greece and Rome, which would gain him durable fame and praise among his countrymen.[50]

In terms of allegiance and identification, these events and experiences determined the complexity of Polybius’s historiographical approach. The historian’s analytic

attitude developed within different political and cultural realities, through the long process of composing and publishing the Histories.[51] The “last writer of a free Greece and the historian of its conquest” lived in a period characterized by strong intercultural connections.[52] In writing the Histories for both Roman and Hellenic audiences, Polybius offered a Greek perspective on Rome’s triumphal advance in the Mediterranean.[53] Simultaneously, the historian had to justify for his fellow countrymen the legitimacy of foreign hegemony over the Hellenic world, while also helping them cope with a new administrative reality. The emphasis on contemporary and “pragmatic history,”[54] namely the specific attention to military strategy, politics, and institutional structures, in addition to representing a stylistic and intellectual choice, allowed Polybius to connect ethnicity and history in a more complex way.[55] For the Achaean historian, who represented the voice of the vanquished, cultural and political superiority did not automatically correspond.[56]

It is well known that Polybius recognized Rome’s “mixed” constitution as one of the principal factors in its surge to power.[57] He interpreted the interplay of consuls, senate, and people in Roman politics as the balanced coexistence of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy—forms of government that had already been implemented in the Hellenic world with varying degrees of success.[58] Polybius’s explanation of Rome’s extraordinary rise could not but simultaneously constitute an assessment of the lapse, however momentary, of Greek supremacy.[59] It is not surprising that the historian’s attitude towards the cultural identity of his hosts, as brilliantly pointed out by Craig Champion, seems equivocal.[60] Whether, according to Polybius, the Romans were members of the civilized Hellenic world or barbarians was “historically contingent upon the health of the institutional structures of the polity” and determined by the alternating cycles of “reason” and “unbridled passion.”[61] Institutions and politics could influence the fate of civilizations. Ethnicity (or culture) did not determine the outcome of events in an absolute way. Yet the dramatic shift of the cultural and political axis of the Mediterranean world must have had a very deep impact on Polybius. Roman dominion seemed to overshadow the achievements of the Persian, Spartan, and Macedonian empires, the most formidable the historian had ever observed and studied.[62] The unprecedented convergence of events and peoples of the known world that had determined Rome’s supremacy also made possible, for the first time, the writing of a synoptic and universal history.[63] And, as we shall see, Fortune would have an interesting role in Polybius’s narrative endeavor.

#### Heaven in the Records

In cross-cultural analyses, the notion of “Heaven” (tian 天) allows the possibility of analyzing Chinese civilization either in terms of uniqueness or comparability. Heaven can epitomize the supposed integration of the natural, political, and moral orders that purportedly characterizes Chinese civilization, or be juxtaposed against the personal Creator God of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.[64] In the former case, Heaven (read as “Nature”) still occupies a preeminent position in theoretical models that emphasize

the distinctive “organicistic” nature of Chinese early thought, which also belies a cultural complex towards the systemic bias of Western philosophical traditions. In the latter case, Heaven either explicitly becomes the “Chinese version of the Christian God,”[65] or, under the influence of Mircea Eliade’s theories, its notion is implicitly assumed as the historical manifestation of the psychological archetype of patriarchal authority.[66]

Interestingly enough, as archeological evidence demonstrates, during the first decades of reunification, Heaven was far from representing the unity of Chinese civilization, for it was conceived, depicted, and worshipped in different ways depending on cultural and geographical contexts.[67] It was at the end of the first century BCE that the Han rulers began to legitimize their authority by institutionalizing a view that, in keeping with Confucian prejudices against the direct involvement of society with spirits and ghosts (i.e., popular religion), embraced (or recreated) the moral rule of the Zhou as a model and integrated the notion of the Mandate of Heaven with Warring State traditions (mainly coming from the coastal state of Qi) concerning the Five Phases (wuxing).

According to the theory of the Mandate of Heaven (Tianming 天命), Heaven would legitimize human institutions by conferring the right to rule the Central States upon worthy lineages, while letting undeserving ones lose it.[68] In the earliest texts of the received tradition, the bestowal of the Mandate sanctions the victory of the exemplary Zhou over the declining Shang while representing a shift between ritual and moral justifications of power.[69] Traditionally, the affirmation of Shang authority was associated with the ritual privileges of their ruling elites to communicate with ancestral spirits directly and by immediate control over resources and land; Zhou propaganda, on the other hand, at least according to texts of Confucian tradition, focused on “quasi-feudal” political devolution and a sovereign who represented more a moral paradigm than an active ruler.[70] As idiomatically chanted in the Odes, in a poem extolling the merits of King Wen, the founder of the Zhou: “High Heaven does its business without sound, without smell.”[71] In other words, men cannot influence Heaven (i.e. Nature or Fate) by means of sacrifices.

As we have seen above, when the Qin reunified the Central States in 221 BCE, after the Zhou lost political supremacy in 771 BCE following centuries of violent strife, they did not seek to justify their successes on moral grounds, but proverbially relied on threatening others with their military superiority and ruthlessness. Therefore, when the Qin were defeated, many expected the Han to condemn their predecessors’ hubristic rule and show that Heaven, like in the case of the Zhou, was bestowing the Mandate upon a morally worthy lineage. However, Emperor Wu, the first emperor who could embark on expensive state ceremonies, clearly rejected the Zhou model of secular moral imperial legitimation and drew considerably from regional forms of worship that focused on the achievement of immortality—ones that involved communicating with spirits and ghosts directly, and led him to travel extensively



throughout the realm.[72] If we interpret Emperor Wu's itinerant ceremonial activities as an attempt to patrol the periphery while seeking popular support for his program of administrative and economic centralization, it makes perfect sense that the reforms carried out after his death in 87 BCE limited state cults to the capital city and abolished ritualized imperial inspections (xunshou 巡守).[73] It can be argued that local elites, through the voice of court Classicists, took advantage of Emperor Wu's death to reaffirm their vested interests in devolution against the direct interference of the Son of Heaven, who intended to realize economic centralization. With the inauguration of the imperial cults of Heaven and Earth, respectively located outside the immediate limits of southern and northern Chang'an, the capital was remapped as a symbolic representation of the universe. Now the ruler, by sacrificing to the suburban altars dedicated to Heaven and Earth, could ritually sanction the order between Heaven, Man, and Earth without leaving the center.[74]

The idea that the cosmic, political, and moral realms were perfectly integrated had a fundamental role in the theories associated with Dong Zhongshu (179–104 BCE), which acquired paramount importance in Ban Gu's (32–92 CE) History of the Former Han (Han shu), eventually representing the official doctrine of dynastic legitimation until the end of the imperial era. Dong had been a famous student of the historical work attributed to Confucius, the Spring and Autumn Annals, in particular of the Gongyang exegetic tradition, which tended to interpret omens as the manifestation of Heaven's regulatory power on human events. The Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals (Chunqiu Fanlu 春秋繁露, attributed to Dong, explains the traditional doctrine of the Mandate of Heaven in the context of the Five Phases, as legitimate rule would realize the correspondence of dynastic and cosmic cycles.

Although Sima Qian studied under Dong, because of the intellectual and biographical factors mentioned above, the historiographical approach of the Records is not consistent with the belief in the mutual influence of Heaven and men (Tian ren xiang guan 天人關, in the readability of the world through the correspondence of microcosmic and macrocosmic phenomena, or in the Providence-like, regulatory function of Heaven.

In what follows, I show how an analysis of the treatment of Heaven in the Records can offer an original perspective on the author's beliefs about the disjunction between morality and success as well as the inadequacy of the traditional literary heritage for the interpretation of present events. In the Records, history does not represent the unfolding of a superior design, while the various meanings of Heaven—from fate or chance to a mere astronomical or natural element—reflect the richness of the cultural world described in the Records, before the establishment of a unitary view.

First of all, the Records mentions the Mandate of Heaven very seldomly. The statement that a given ruler "receives the mandate" (shou ming 受命) does not imply in the text any extra-human investiture, but that his sovereignty was generally



acknowledged and accepted. The Records (especially in the chapters dealing with events that occurred during the Qin and the Han, which were closer to the time of the authors)[75] does not interpret omens and portents as manifestations of a superior design directly connected to Heaven; in fact, in most cases it openly suggests that they were just a fabrication.[76] On the relationship between Heaven and the destiny of imperial houses, the Records is intentionally ambiguous and, in the case of the founder of the Han, Liu Bang, it connects his successes with the controversial (and notoriously vicious) Empress Lü.

The collective chapter on imperial consorts, the “Houses of the External Relatives” (“Waiqi shijia” 外戚家), clearly questions the possibility of understanding or controlling the fates of men (and rulers), while stating that, no matter how skilled rulers may be, their eventual success will also be owed to the support of an exceptional spouse.[77] Given the necessity of producing and grooming a male heir in a patrilineal aristocratic system, conjugal love was definitely the most relevant among the Five Relations (Wu Lun 五倫). Of note is that the Records explains gender relations in terms of complementarity, but does not refer to yin-yang dualism explicitly and systematically as it would become customary after Ban Zhao’s (45–c. 116 CE) Instructions for Women.[78] In fact, the Records introduces Lü’s role in the creation of the empire by emphasizing the impossibility of discerning the interplay of factors contributing to a joyous marriage.[79] Despite the ambiguity of Sima Qian’s treatment of Gaozu’s consort (and the disapproval of later commentators), the Records devotes one of the basic annals to Lü, a woman who ruled on behalf of her son, the weakling Emperor Hui (194–188 BCE).[80] Lü is depicted as shrewd and manipulative, ready to resort to torture and murder while unsuccessfully attempting to replace the Liu ruling lineage with members of her own family. Nevertheless, according to the Records, she played a fundamental role in holding the reins of the fledging empire in a tumultuous age.[81] Lü accompanied Liu Bang during his struggle for control over the Central States, and most importantly, the Records describes her as deeply aware of the factors in which the fortune of the empire lay, for her practical sense complemented the volatile temper of her husband.

Provided that it is possible to recognize a coherent attitude toward omens and predestination in Records, it connects Fate, Liu Bang, and Lü in an extremely interesting way. Whereas the future empress’s father was the first one to recognize in Liu Bang’s facial features potential for greatness, Lü herself would hear about her family’s predestination from a mysterious wanderer she met while working in the fields with her sons. Oddly enough, the text informs the reader that Liu Bang would reach the scene later, as he was using an outhouse.[82] Years later, when the appearance of a peculiarly shaped group of clouds reinforces the paranoia of the Qin’s first ruler over the imminent rise of a new Son of Heaven, we see that Liu Bang, instead of facing his imperial destiny, immediately looks for a hiding place. The text emphasizes Lü’s practical sense under these circumstances, as she uses the cloud

formations to find out where her husband concealed himself.[83] This aspect of Lü's character is even more evident in the account of Liu Bang's death. The Records makes it clear that the founder of the Han eventually embraced beliefs about his extra-human investiture so wholeheartedly that once ill, he refused any cures, because "the Son of Heaven cannot be cured by human remedies." While her husband lay dying, we see Lü solely concerned with the replacement of Xiao He, the skillful minister and general to whom the Records clearly ascribes the military successes of the Han.[84]

It is evident that the Records suggests that traditional beliefs about dynastic legitimacy could not be applied to the complex circumstances that led to the Han unification. The important role of the cynical Lü provides an implicit mockery of the rhetoric of the Mandate of Heaven, which is even more blatant in the account in Gaozu's biography, in which old Lady Wu, the manager of young Liu Bang's favorite brothel, recognized the portentous image of a dragon, a symbol of imperial power, floating over the intoxicated and unconscious future Son of Heaven.[85]

Through these narrative devices, the Records simply emphasizes that in uncertain times, people from any walk of life are eager to recognize manifestations of a preordained destiny; that the very belief in destiny, along with its propagandistic exploitation, would constitute a fundamental historical factor. Going back to the origin of the events that led to the triumph of the Han, the Records mentions an omen for the first time in the chapter about Chen She, one of the two heads of the levy whose revolt in the southern state of Chu sparked the revolution that would overthrow the Qin in 206 BCE.[86] Famously, in the second month of the second year of the Second Emperor of Qin (209 BCE), Chen She, a humble hired laborer, is appointed, along with Wu Guang, to lead a group of nine hundred men to garrison a village in the north, near present-day Beijing, against possible Xiongnu attacks. As a heavy rain falls, Chen She realizes that they would not reach their destination on time, and would probably face the punishment of decapitation. Aware of their meager chances of survival, Chen She and Wu Guang decided to revolt and at least die for the glory of Chu.[87]

The Second Emperor had infamously taken the throne by killing the legitimate heir, his brother Fu Su. But since no one had seen his corpse, some believed that Fu Su was simply hiding while awaiting an opportunity to assert revenge.[88] Thus, Chen She convinced Wu Guang to stir and lead a rebellion disguised, respectively, as Fusu and the beloved Chu general Xiang Yan, who had bravely fought the Qin as well, before mysteriously vanishing. Upon embarking on their military enterprise, Chen and Wu decided to consult a diviner. The response sounded positive but ended with an ominous note: "You will accomplish all your plans and achieve success. But then, would you seek responses with ghosts?"[89]

At the time the passage was written, everyone knew that Chen and Wu would both perish (and be in the ghosts' numbers) before the establishment of the Han. The Records, in hindsight, is probably satirizing their naïve optimism. According to the text, the two rebels reacted enthusiastically to the divination and felt encouraged to

make up their own omens. Chen and Wu swiftly wrote “Chen shall be a king” on a piece of white silk and stuffed it in the belly of a fish to the astonishment and awe of the soldiers who were going to have it during the common meal.[90] Furthermore, Chen sent Wu to hide behind a shrine in a grove by the camp. When night fell, Wu produced light effects by concealing a torch underneath a basket while imitating the cry of a fox (an animal believed to belong to the realm of spirits), howling: “The great Chu will rise, Chen She will be king!”[91]

This proved to be enough to convince the laborers to rebel, fight, and eventually die at Chen and Wu’s orders. The Records emphasizes Wu Guang’s good relationship with the soldiers—even going so far as to suggest that they would have done anything for him.[92] Charisma and leadership qualities would also characterize the founder of the Han, as according to the Records, regular soldiers easily related to the unsophisticated, sluggish, and frequently inebriated Liu Bang. A close reading of the text shows that Liu Bang succeeded where Chen and Wu had failed, because, in addition to his popularity among commoners, he could also benefit from the support of aristocratic leaders who represented an element of continuity with the elite traditions of the Central States. Yet, the recourse to popular culture, the beliefs about semi-divine leaders, as in Chen and Wu’s case, were fundamental in establishing a connection between Liu Bang and the common people—even though the Records, as I shall show below, would satirize attempts at interpreting allegedly miraculous events in light of Five Phases theories.

Returning to Liu Bang’s biography, after he had already shown the signs of predestination addressed above, we find in the Records an episode that closely resembles the circumstances of Chen She’s revolt. When Liu Bang was still just a village head, he received the order to conduct a group of convicted laborers from his hometown in the south to the site where the First Emperor of Qin was building his mausoleum. Along the way, the laborers began to defect one by one and disappeared in such numbers that Liu Bang feared he might reach his destination alone. Surprisingly, instead of reacting with authority, Liu Bang stopped his march, got drunk, and then decided to return home after releasing all the men under his command.[93]

The action is set to reach the center of the empire and the locations of the fundamental struggle for the unification that would be the main topic of the Records. Yet, Sima Qian describes Liu Bang as merely concerned with his petty habits and his obscure hometown—at the time, not only did he not harbor any revolutionary dreams, but even held the Qin in awe.[94] Thus, a group of about ten men decided to accompany him back home. While crossing the swampy area, a scout rushed back and suggested that they all retreat, as a big snake was blocking the path. Liu Bang, still drunk, boasted of the brave soldiers’ fearlessness, advanced, pulled out his sword, and beheaded the reptile. He continued on his way for a while before falling asleep under the effect of all the alcohol he had consumed. Meanwhile, a man who was lagging behind reached the spot of Liu Bang’s heroics, where he found an old woman weeping.

According to her story, she was grieving for her son, the son of the White Emperor (Baidi 白帝, who, after assuming the semblance of a snake, had just been slaughtered by the son of the Red Emperor (Chidi 赤帝).[95] The man was incredulous. He wished to enquire further to ascertain her sincerity, but she suddenly disappeared. When Liu Bang finally woke up, he was delighted to hear the man's extraordinary account. And it seems that from that day on Liu had his self-confidence dramatically bolstered while his followers looked up at him with increasing awe.[96]

The Records relates the miraculous events that should sanction the extra-human investiture of the Han to the accounts of convicted laborers who must have been grateful for being released from a feared corvée that might have meant death (the men who worked at Qin Shihuang's mausoleum were routinely killed at the end of their duty) and to their magnanimous, sometimes sluggish, and often intoxicated leader. If portents were to manifest Heaven's will about the fate of dynasties, the Records' narrative makes their reliability at least problematic. If there is a superior design concerning the fall of the Qin and the rise of the Han, both Chen She and Liu Bang's goals seem selfish and shortsighted. By contrast, the element that becomes more evident is the text's focus on personalities, behaviors, and interactions.

Thus, if we compare Chen She and Liu Bang's stories, the almost reckless resoluteness of the former contrasts with the heedlessness and indolence of the latter. In many instances, despite his bad judgment or even cowardice, Liu Bang (and the future of the Han dynasty) was saved by the prompt advice and intervention of his aides. According to the Records, Liu Bang lacked two fundamental Confucian qualities: respect for tradition and filial piety. Famously, after his successful march, Liu Bang was ready to destroy the buildings and archives of the old capital city even at the risk of compromising administrative continuity; he did not show special concern that his father was held hostage and, while being chased by his enemies, would have dumped his son and heir from his carriage in order to accelerate his flight.[97]

The Records portrays Liu Bang as scarcely aware of the importance of the historic events for which he played the role of protagonist. He would ask his more articulate officials to explain why he managed to defeat the braver and more competent Xiang Yu. However, even though Liu Bang did not seem to grasp the value of effective propaganda, he left the most sophisticated and shrewd of his followers to connect his rule to glorious ages of the past through literary citations. His famous dialogue with the classicist, Lu Jia, clarifies the Records' take on the creation of the rhetoric about the triumph of the Han. Lu Jia tries repeatedly to persuade the emperor of the value of the classics, but what he obtains is a scornful reply:

"All I possess I have won on horseback!" Said the emperor. "Why should I bother with the Odes and Documents?" "Your Majesty might have won it on horseback, but can you rule it on horseback?" Asked Master Lu. "... Qin entrusted its future solely to punishment and laws, without changing with the times and thus eventually brought about the destruction of its ruling family. If after it had united the world under its rule,

Qin had practiced benevolence and righteousness and modeled its ways upon the sages of antiquity, how would Your Majesty ever have been able to win possession of the empire?" The emperor grew embarrassed and uneasy and finally said to Master Lu, "Try writing something for me on the reasons why Qin lost the empire and I won it, and on the failures of the states of ancient times." [98]

Eventually, Liu Bang would take credit for recognizing and exploiting the talent of his officials, as though letting them save him from his own inconsiderate behaviors and shortsighted decisions was part of his conscious plan:

When it comes to sitting within the tents of command and devising strategies that will assure us victory a thousand miles away, I am no match for Zhang Liang. In ordering the state and caring for the people, in providing rations for the troops and seeing to it that lines of supplies are not cut off, I cannot compare to Xiao He. In leading an army of a million men, achieving success with every battle, and victory with every attack, I cannot come up to Han Xin. These three are all men of extraordinary ability, and it is because I was able to make use of them that I gained possession of the world. [99]

Finally, it is clear that when the Records mentions Heaven and its positive role in determining human affairs, it is merely reporting ideas and beliefs, cultural factors that, in the opinion of its authors, played a fundamental role in shaping historical events. When Sima Qian directly refers to Heaven in his personal remarks, it seems that the ambiguous and even tautological tone of his statements is meant to admonish the readers that historical causes are to be sought beyond grandiose proclamations and official truths. After the narration of the struggles between the Qin emperor and the feudal lords, whom he refused to grant enough land, the fourth Chronological Table (biao 表 on the states of Qin and Chu reads thus:

Yet from the lanes of the common people there arose the signs of a man of kingly stature whose alliances and military campaigns surpassed those of the three dynasties of the Xia, Shang and Zhou. Qin's earlier prohibitions served only the noble and the wealthy and helped them remove the obstacles they had to face. Therefore [Gaozu] manifested his indignation and became the leader of the world. Why do people say that no one can become a king unless he possesses land? Is such a man not what the literary tradition would consider a "True Sage"? Is this not the work of Heaven? Is this not the work of Heaven? Is not the True Sage the man who is able to receive the mandate and become emperor? [100]

Is the Records stating that Heaven is the power that allowed a commoner to reestablish the privileges of a group of dispossessed landowners? Is the historian referring here to the momentous convergence of exceptional personalities around Liu Bang? Did he prevail because those aristocrats, generals, and politicians whom Sima Qian ultimately credits with Liu's success relied on Liu's charisma and popularity, as they thought that the future Gaozu, being a landless outsider, could not interfere with



their specific interests? Is the text suggesting that a legitimate ruler is just the one who, *ex post facto*, can be acknowledged as having real power?

I believe that the Records' rhetorical and ironic way of referring to Heaven is even more evident in a statement by Li Yiji, "the Mad Scholar," an outspoken wise man of humble origins who would end up being boiled alive. Here Master Li is advising about possible military strategies against Liu Bang's fiercest rival, and advocating the necessity of controlling the granaries.

I heard a saying that "he who knows the 'heaven' of Heaven may make himself a king, but he who has not this knowledge may not. To the king the people are Heaven, whereas to the people food is Heaven." [101]

According to this passage, Heaven refers to the specific knowledge required to get the best out of specific circumstances or social conditions. It does not present any extra-human connotation. It is an empty word that can be used to glorify one's contingent aims. It is connected to adaptability and receptiveness rather than to constants and absolutes. And in this respect, Liu Bang acted, almost unconsciously, as an empty center around which different interests and agencies could converge.

Polybius and Fortune between the Hellenic World and Rome

As for the role of Fortune (Tychê, Τύχη in Greek, Fortuna in Latin) in the Greco-Roman world, it epitomized neither the extra-human investiture of ruling lineages nor the organic connection of the human and natural realms. Yet, as pointed out by J. J. Pollitt, in the social and political uncertainty that characterized the Hellenistic period, Fortune positively turned into an obsession. [102] Customarily personified as a female deity, Tyche was often chosen as the patron of newly founded colonies, as their future could not be entrusted to a pre-existent cultic tradition. [103] Between the rise of the Macedonian empire and the consolidation of Rome's power over the Mediterranean, the known world seemed to be undergoing continuous and unforeseeable transformations. [104] Whether life was subject to unpredictable chance, as the Epicureans held, or ruled by unchangeable destiny, as believed by the Stoics, Fortune could be invoked to favor the precarious existence of individuals or communities throughout the Mediterranean and the ancient Middle East. [105]

According to the literary and legendary tradition, it was the sixth king Servius Tullius (578–535 BCE) who introduced to Rome the cult of Fortune by building on the Capitoline the temples of Fortuna Primigenia and of Fortuna Obsequens. [106] Either the son of a slave, or the heir of an enemy chief killed by the Romans, Servius was raised at court among the servants while surrounded by signs of supernatural predestination. Queen Tanaquil, the wife of Lucius Tarquinius Priscus (616–579 BCE), the first Etruscan ruler of Rome, perceived her lineage as extremely vulnerable. She arranged for Servius to marry her daughter as she hoped that he would be the savior of her husband's dynasty. [107]

Thus, upon the violent death of her husband Tarquinius Priscus, Tanaquil solicited Servius to take over the throne. In his case, as he showed clear signs of an extra-human



investiture, lineage should not count. She admonished Servius that in accomplishing his royal mission, he should consider who he was and not whence he was born.[108] Servius would reign for forty-four years until his violent death in 535 BCE. His murderer was his son-in-law, Lucius Tarquinius Superbus, Tarquinius Priscus's son, as well as the seventh, and last king of Rome. His proverbially violent and corrupt reign led to the revolt of 509 BCE and to the establishment of the Republic.

Servius Tullius's relationship with Fortune has been connected to the "anomaly" of his kingship, which he achieved despite his non-Roman and probably non-aristocratic origins and also owing to the influence and scheming of a foreign woman.[109] In the words of Plutarch (46–120 CE), Fortune epitomizes the exceptional character of Servius's reign:

This was a token of his birth from fire and an excellent sign pointing to his unexpected accession to the kingship, which he gained after the death of Tarquinius, with the zealous assistance of Tanaquil. Inasmuch as he of all kings is thought to have been naturally the least suited to monarchy and the least desirous of it, he who was minded to resign the kingship, but was prevented from doing so; for it appears that Tanaquil on her death-bed made him swear that he would remain in power and would ever set before him the ancestral Roman form of government. Thus to Fortune wholly belongs the kingship of Servius, which he received contrary to his expectations and retained against his will.[110]

The role that Fortune plays in Polybius's histories does not seem to coincide with the fulfillment of the author's hopes and expectations. Unlike Christian Providence, it does not constitute the manifestation in history of an unambiguous supernatural plan or the victory of rightful forces. In the Fortune of the Histories, the historiographical and the moral levels are only connected to the extent to which Tyche's unexpected turns test men's wills and skills, just as Rome's triumphs must have challenged the Hellenic pride of Polybius. As clearly stated in the proem of the Histories, Fortune represents the factor that allows events to converge towards one end. Unlike the Records' treatment of Heaven, Polybius programmatically sets Tyche at the center of the theoretical model that should inform his Histories:

For what gives my work its peculiar quality, and what is most remarkable in the present age is this. Fortune has guided almost all the affairs of the world in one direction and has forced them to incline towards one and the same end; a historian should likewise bring before his readers under one view the operations by which she has accomplished her general purpose. Indeed it was chiefly this that invited and encouraged me to undertake my task; and secondarily the fact that none of my contemporaries have undertaken to write a general history, in which case I should have been much less eager to take this in hand.[111]

It is in the universality of his approach, Polybius claims, that his oeuvre is superior to previous historiographical enterprises.[112] Other authors such as Ephorus and Herodotus had already included remote lands and civilizations in their narrations, but

the unprecedented scope of Rome's conquests made it possible to entwine the unitary, teleological narrative that would characterize the *Histories* as a groundbreaking work:

Now up to this time the world's history had been, so to speak, a series of disconnected transactions, as widely separated in their origin and results as in their localities. But from this time forth History becomes a connected whole: the affairs of Italy and Libya are involved with those of Asia and Greece, and the tendency of all is to unity. This is why I have fixed upon this era as the starting-point of my work.[113]

It is to this unitary end, as Momigliano has noted, that Polybius's persistent popularity up until the modern age is due.[114] Although Polybius did not share Herodotus's narrative talent and richness or Thucydides's analytical rigor, critics could still praise the quasi-Christian universality of the *Histories*. [115] But unlike Providence, Fortune in Polybius does not embody the moralizing will of a conscious deity. The only instance in which the Greek historian qualifies Fortune's agency in determining Rome's success as a non-arbitrary, quasi-ethical act is in reference to the work *On Fortune* (*Peri Tyches*) by the Aristotelian philosopher Demetrius of Phalerum (c. 350–280 BCE).[116] Just as Demetrius was able to foresee Tyche punishing the hubristic Persians at the hand of the Macedonians, so too does Polybius acknowledge the punishment of hubris in the defeat of Perseus at Pydna by the Romans in 168 BCE. The initial fault lay in the scheme devised in 203 BCE by Perseus's father Philip V of Macedon together with Antiochus III of Syria to attack and divide the kingdom of the infant Ptolemy V of Egypt.[117]

Polybius considered Fortune's direct moralizing function only occasionally and hardly as an element of a conscious plan. Its main role consisted in testing human behavior and in exemplifying the didactic purpose of history writing:

All historians . . . have impressed on us that the soundest education and training for a life of active politics is the study of History, and the surest and indeed the only method of learning how to bear bravely the vicissitudes of Fortune." [118]

Despite the theoretical statements that open the *Histories*, scholars deemed Polybius's connection of Fortune and empirical facts as one of the most problematic and inconstant features of his writing. According to Walbank, both linguistic ambiguity and philosophical naiveté characterize Polybius's narrative recourse to Fortune. As the British scholar notes, in the *Histories*, the word *tyche* is at times employed loosely as a tense of the verb *τυγχάνω*, "to happen." This usage is consistent with the mention of Tyche in casual conversations during Polybius's times, when it referred to agents considered completely outside human control, or was simply uttered as an interjection—as well as "Heaven," or "God" in contemporary speech[119]

As for Polybius's philosophical inconsistency, in Walbank's opinion, the Greek historian often mentioned Tyche in order to compensate for his unsophisticated application of the principle of causality in the *Histories*. [120] Whenever Polybius could not account adequately for the "interactions of events and the dynamic and dialectical character of almost any train of causation," Fortune would intervene almost as a *deus*

ex machina of the Greek tragic literary tradition.[121] In other instances, Tyche coincided with the unpredictability of meteorological and natural forces. As Polybius states in one of the surviving fragments of Book 36 (which deals with the Macedonian Wars, 215–148 BCE):

In finding fault with those who ascribe public events and incidents to Fate and Chance, I now wish to state my opinion on this subject as far as it is admissible to do so in a strictly historical work. Now indeed as regard to things the causes of which it is impossible or difficult for a mere man to understand, we may perhaps be justified in getting out of the difficulty by setting them down to the action of a god or of chance, I mean such things as exceptionally heavy and continuous rain or snow, or on the other hand the destruction of crops by severe drought or frost, or a persistent outbreak of plague or other similar things of which it is not easy to detect the cause. So in regard to such matters we naturally bow to public opinion, as we cannot make out why they happen, and attempting by prayer and sacrifice to appease the heavenly powers, we send to ask the gods what we must do and say, to set things right and cause the evil that afflicts us to cease. But as for matters the efficient and final cause of which it is possible to discover we should not, I think, put them down to divine action.[122]

The last sentences of this passage clarify Polybius's concern with direct divine intervention, which he strives to exclude from the explanation of causal connections. In the narration of Hannibal's heroic march through the Alps, for example, he chastises the bad habits of previous authors who embellished the simple history of facts by mentioning the intervention of supernatural forces.[123] However, Polybius acknowledges the value of religious beliefs in restraining the behavior of Rome's masses. In his opinion, the political exploitation of the sacred and of people's irrational fears makes Rome superior to its contemporary rivals:

But the most important difference for the better which the Roman commonwealth appears to me to display is in their religious beliefs. For I conceive that what in other nations is looked upon as a reproach, I mean a scrupulous fear of the gods, is the very thing which keeps the Roman commonwealth together. To such an extraordinary height is this carried among them, both in private and public business, that nothing could exceed it. Many people might think this unaccountable; but in my opinion their object is to use it as a check upon the common people. If it were possible to form a state wholly of philosophers, such a custom would perhaps be unnecessary. But seeing that every multitude is fickle, and full of lawless desires, unreasoning anger, and violent passion, the only resource is to keep them in check by mysterious terrors and scenic effects of this sort. Wherefore, to my mind, the ancients were not acting without purpose or at random, when they brought in among the vulgar those opinions about the gods, and the belief in the punishments in Hades: much rather do I think that men nowadays are acting rashly and foolishly in rejecting them.[124]

And it is perhaps Polybius's view of religion as *instrumentum regni* that, through Livy (59 BCE–17 CE), would inspire Niccolò Machiavelli's (1469–1527) influential analysis of the political use of religion throughout Western history.[125]

#### Conclusions

Polybius's seemingly contradictory treatment of Fortune clearly stems from his complex relationship with the rise of Rome, which he had to accept and explain despite his possibly mismatched emotional attachments. The traditional association of Tyche in the ancient Mediterranean world with new political realities provided Polybius with an evocative unifying element that could resemble a conventional god. Simultaneously it constituted an intermediate stage towards a rationalistic refutation of the role of the divine in history. Fortune, according to Polybius, acted to a certain extent as a traditional force in that it seemed to punish and reward specific ruling lineages by following a hereditary principle. Simultaneously, as the fates of different civilizations and polities were coming together in a new world, in the *Histories*, Fortune replaced the rivaling orders represented by the myriad of Mediterranean gods, even though it could not embody specific universal values yet.

The *Records* instead challenges traditional beliefs and expectations about the unity of the universe and the correspondence of the political and moral orders by unraveling the complexity of human factors and their interactions. For these reasons, while Polybius's discourse on Fortune engages in comparative, cross-cultural analyses, the very notion of Heaven in the *Records* brings into question the importance and readability of precedents, and the continuity of the civilization of the Central States between past and present. Heaven and Fortune are both associated with the possibility of change, the unpredictable, and the mysterious. But while Tyche's female connotation characterizes fate as fickle and ultimately unreliable, in the *Records*, even the traits of elusiveness associated with Heaven, are in a way part of the shared tradition, neither external, nor foreign.

Both the *Histories* and the *Records* stress the function of beliefs concerning the divine in shaping the fate of civilizations. However, whereas the institutionalization of irrational fears, as Polybius remarks, would reinforce the identity and cohesion of Roman society against external threats, the multifarious world of popular religion depicted in the *Records* would have no echo in the establishment of the official dynastic doctrine at the end of the Western Han, as references to an active relationship with the extra-human realm would famously disappear from official discourses on statecraft and morality until the end of the nineteenth century.[126] Heaven, which would be at the center of theories about the interconnection of the natural and human realms, is treated in the *Records* as an obsolete linguistic residue, as the text shows the inadequacy of traditional knowledge in understanding the present.

Ultimately, neither Polybius nor the authors of the *Records* believed that political unification necessarily coincided with the establishment of superior justice or, in other words, with a kind of order they might have actually welcomed. Their historical

sensibility did not lead them to expect that the world must make sense as a whole. For them, extra-human forces—to the extent to which their intervention could be proven—were not clearly acting in accordance with precise design that entailed the manifestation of universal, super-ethnic values. In those times and circumstances, the Records and Polybius did not conceive the extra-human realm, “the divine,” as intrinsically fair, coherent, or as One.

More generally, this essay demonstrates the necessity of historicizing the very notion of religion as well as the relationship between what is perceived as sacred (i.e., unchangeable, and beyond historical contingency) and the foundation of shared morals and identities. In other words, it invites scholars in all fields and areas to question the applicability of paradigmatic notions regarding religion deriving from the Abrahamic traditions to different historical and cultural contexts, as only the programmatic awareness and deconstruction of possible ethnocentric biases can establish solid grounds for fruitful cross-cultural dialogues.

#### Notes

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983), 204. ↗

Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 29. ↗

Cited in and translated from Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, vol. 10 (Torino: Einaudi, 1975), 1225–26. ↗

Among the few systematic historicizations of the concept of religion are Wilfred Cantwell Smith’s *The Meaning and End of Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 15–50; and Brent Nongbri’s *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2013). It is also noteworthy that the very notion of religion, as well as the term *zongjiao* (in turn a Japanese translation of the English “religion”), was imported to China from Japan in the wake of the Chinese defeat of the Sino Japanese war (1894–1895), as the thinkers of the Hundred Days’ Reform movement believed that the formalization and enforcement of a “state religion” would favor and accelerate the process of nation building by fostering ideological cohesion. See Vincent Goossaert, “1898: The Beginning of the End for Chinese Religion?,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 65(2) (May 2006): 320–24; Jason Ananda Josephson, *The Invention of Religion in Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). On the history of concept of “world religions,” see Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). For the post-Han period, see the masterful analysis of approaches to the study of Chinese religions in Robert Ford Campany, “On the Very Idea of Religions (In the Modern West and in Early Medieval China),” *History of Religions* 42(4) (May 2003): 287–319. ↗

Robert N. Bellah, *Religion in Human Evolution: From the Paleolithic to the Axial Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), 1; Bellah paraphrases a



definition in Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 44. Durkheim's influence has been extremely relevant in Chinese studies due to the work of his student Marcel Granet (1884–1940). ♣

Famously, the first attested connection between rituals and identity is in Herodotus (*Histories* VIII, 144). In the context of a speech about the impiety of the Persians, defined Greek identity in these terms: “kinship of all Greeks in blood and speech, and the shrines of gods and the sacrifices that we have in common, and the likeness of our way of life.” On the issue concerning the relationship between the “incomparable” model represented by Christianity and other ancient religions, see Jonathan Z. Smith, “On Comparison,” in *Roman Religion*, ed. Clifford Ando (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 23–38. As for China, see Jordan Paper, *The Spirits are Drunk: Comparative Approaches to Chinese Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995); and, for a philosophical approach, David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Anticipating China: Thinking Through the Narratives of Chinese and Western Culture* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), xiii–xxiii. ♣

By “social practices or processes,” I refer to a range of formulations, from Antonio Gramsci's elaboration of the Marxist concept of *Praxis* to Hannah Arendt's *Vita Activa*. For Gramsci, in addition to the passage cited above (note 3), see Walter Adamson, *Hegemony and Revolution: A Study of Antonio Gramsci's Political and Cultural Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980). For the concept of *Vita Activa*, see Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 7–21, 248–326. ♣

For example, see Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003); Charles Taylor, “Why We Need a Radical Redefinition of Secularism,” in Judith Butler, Jürgen Habermas, Charles Taylor, and Cornel West, *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 34–59. Also see Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996). For a very popular “universalistic” reading of world monotheistic religions, see Karen Armstrong, *A History of God: The 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (New York: Random House, 1993). On the role of religion in today's political and ideological conflicts, see Reza Aslan, *How to Win a Cosmic War: God, Globalization, and the End of the War on Terror* (New York: Random House, 2009). On a meta-historical concept of religion as vehicle of possible meta-cultural encounters, also see Roy Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Max L. Stackhouse and Don S. Browning, eds., *God and Globalization* (New York: T&T Clark, 2003), 4 vols. ♣

On New Atheism, see Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (New York: Norton, 2005); and Michel Onfray, *Atheist Manifesto: The Case Against Christianity, Judaism, and Islam* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2011). ♣



See Clifford Ando, *The Matter of the Gods: Religion and the Roman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 43–58. ♣

In certain cases, seeking Indian antecedents of basic Western religious ideas served the purpose of belittling or denying the import of the Jewish contribution; see Douglas T. McGetchin, *Indology, Indomania, and Orientalism: Ancient India's Rebirth in Modern Germany* (Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2009) ♣

Norman J. Girardot, *The Victorian Translation of China: James Legge's Oriental Pilgrimage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). ♣

Anne Birrell, "James Legge and the Chinese Mythological Tradition," *History of Religions* 38(4) (May 1999): 331–53. Birrell holds that Legge (a Scottish non-conformist Christian minister) did not take into account contemporary theories on the study of ancient mythology, probably because of his confessional attitude and his isolation from mainstream intellectual life (*ibid.*, 332). For an exhaustive overview of the history of the field, see Anne Birrell, *Chinese Mythology: An Introduction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 1–22. ♣

These ideas would be formalized in the so-called Urmonotheismus (or Primeval Monotheism), a theory developed by Andrew Lang (1844–1912) and Wilhelm Schmidt (1868–1954). See Wilhelm Smith, *The Origin and Growth of Religion: Facts and Theories* (London: Methue, 1931); Ernest Brandewie, *Wilhelm Schmidt and the Origin of the Idea of God* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1983). Schmidt's interpretation of monotheism as the manifestation of a priori meta-historical truth was refuted in Raffaele Pettazzoni, "Das Ende des Urmonotheismus," *Numen* 5 (1958): 161–63. On primeval monotheism, also see Dario Sabbatucci, *La prospettiva storico-religiosa: fede, religione e cultura* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1990), 125–40. ♣

And even materialistic, Marxist, or post-Marxist analyses (especially those still prevalent in the People's Republic of China) are after all rooted in non-metaphysical interpretations of Hegel's teleological philosophy of history. ♣

Karl Jaspers, *Way to Wisdom: An Introduction to Philosophy* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1951), 98. See also Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History* (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1953); Heiner Roetz, *Confucian Ethics of the Axial Age: A Reconstruction under the Aspect of the Breakthrough toward Postconventional Thinking* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993). ♣

According to Mircea Eliade's (1907–1986) approach, in turn influenced by K. G. Jung's (1875–1961), the yearning for the divine would represent an a priori psychological modality; see Mircea Eliade, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1987); *Symbolism, the Sacred, and the Arts* (New York: Crossroad, 1985); and *A History of Religious Ideas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978). ♣

Georg G. Iggers and Q. Edward Wang, *A Global History of Modern Historiography* (Harlow: Pearson, 2008), 48. On the Jesuits' attempts to find a Chinese notion or term that could correspond to that of a Christian god, see Liam Matthew

Brockey, *Journey to the East: The Jesuit Mission to China, 1579–1724* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2007), 85–91. ♣

The prominent historian of Chinese philosophy Angus Graham identified the Zhou as the axial “time of awakening” for China, when “[t]he Chou identified their supreme authority T’ien (Heaven), a sky-god hardly distinguished from the sky itself, with Ti the high god of the Shang.” See Angus C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao, Philosophical Argument in Ancient China* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1989), 1. ♣

The issues regarding the authorship of the *Shiji* are extremely complex. The text was compiled, written, and edited by Sima Qian and his father Tan and eventually underwent several additions and interpolations. Esther Sunkyoung Klein, in her recent “The History of a Historian: Perspectives on the Authorial Roles of Sima Qian” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2010), has contextualized the different readings of the *Shiji* throughout the centuries by focusing on the ways cultural expectations modified its reception. Consistent with such an approach, Klein has aptly overcome issues about the *Shiji*’s authorship by focusing on the intellectual impact of the text in different periods and engaging with the notion of “author-function” (in turn borrowed from Michel Foucault). In substantial agreement with such an interpretation, in the present essay, I use interchangeably “Sima Qian” and “Records” only for narrative purposes. ♣

See Arnaldo Momigliano, “The Herodotean and Thucydidean Tradition,” in *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 29, 50. ♣

Xu Fuguan, *Liang Han sixiang shi*, vol. 3 (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1980), 195–97. ♣

On the relationship between Fortune (Tyche) in Polybius and Josephus (37–100 CE) as a divine unifying force, see Eric Gruen, “Polybius and Josephus on Rome,” in *Polybius & His World: Essays in Memory of F. W. Walbank*, ed. Bruce Gibson and Thomas Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 257–58. ♣

See Walter Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998); *Babylon, Memphis, Persepolis: Eastern Contexts of Greek Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007); Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (London: Blackwell, 2000). ♣

On the discourse on the Other as a foil for the formalization of a given cultural identity, see Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1979); James Romm, *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought: Geography, Exploration, and Fiction* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992); and George Fredrickson, *The Comparative Imagination: On the History of Racism, Nationalism, and Social Movements* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). For a classic formulation of ethnicity in anthropological terms, see Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference* (Boston: Little, Brown Series in Anthropology, 1969). ♣

Herodotus (Histories VIII, 144), in the context of a speech about the impiety of the Persians, famously defined Greek identity in these terms: "kinship of all Greeks in blood and speech, and the shrines of gods and the sacrifices that we have in common, and the likeness of our way of life." For a new analysis of Herodotus's complex attitude towards the Persians, see Erich S. Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011), 21–39; and François Hartog, *The Mirror of Herodotus: The Representation of the Other in the Writing of History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). On the theme and debates on Greek identities, see F. W. Walbank, "Hellenes and Achaeans: 'Greek Nationality' Revisited," in *Further Studies in the Ancient Greek Polis*, ed. Pernille Flensted-Jensen (Stuttgart: Historia Einzelschriften, 2000), 18; Paul Cartledge, "Herodotus and 'the Other': A Meditation on Empire," *EMC/CV* 9 (1990): 27–40; "'We Are All Greeks?' Ancient (especially Herodotean) and Modern Contestations of Hellenism," *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 40(1) (December 1995): 75–82. On the cultural context of Greek historiography, see also Arnaldo Momigliano, "The Herodotean and Thucydidean Tradition," in *The Classical Foundation of Modern Historiography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 29–53; also, by the same author, *Alien Wisdom: The Limit of Hellenization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). ♣

Ray Laurence, "Territory, Ethnonyms and Geography: The Construction of Identity in Roman Italy," in *Cultural Identity in the Roman Empire*, ed. Ray Laurence and Joanne Berry (London: Routledge, 1998), 64–78. On the complex relationship of Roman intellectual with Greek culture, see Erich S. Gruen, *Culture and National Identity in Republican Rome* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992); Fabrizio Fabbrini, *Maecenas. Il collezionismo nel mondo romano dall'età degli Scipioni a Cicerone* (Arezzo: Istituto di Storia Antica, 2001). ♣

On a comparative approach to the issues of the other and identity, see Mu-chou Poo, *Enemies of Civilization: Attitudes toward Foreigners in Ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, and China* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2005). ♣

*Ibid.*, 154–59. As an example of Chinese nationalistic attitude towards the Other, Poo cites Qian Mu, *Guoshi dagang* (Taipei: Shangwu, 1970). On the creation of cultural borders in Chinese historiography, see Wang Mingke, *Huaxia bianyuan: lishi jiyi yu zuqun rentong* (Beijing: Shehui kexue chubanshe, 2006). ♣

Tamara Chin provides a compelling analysis of Sima Qian's attitude towards the Xiongnu vis-à-vis later historical works such as the *Han Shu* and the *Hou Han Shu*; see her "Defamiliarizing the Foreigner: Sima Qian's Ethnography and Han-Xiongnu Marriage Diplomacy," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 70(2) (December 2010): 320. Chin's thesis is the basis for my analysis of the theme of ethnicity in Sima Qian. See also Zhang Dake, "Sima Qian de minzu yitong sixiang," in *Shiji yanju* (Beijing: Shangwu, 2011), 438–53; and Hyun Jin Kim, *Ethnicity and Foreigners in Ancient Greece and China* (London: Duckworth, 2009). See Nicola Di Cosmo, *Ancient China*

and Its Enemies: The Rise of Nomadic Power in East Asian History (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); and Sophia-Karin Psarras, "Han and Xiongnu: A Reexamination of Cultural and Political Relations," *Monumenta Serica* 51 (2003): 55–236. ♣

For biographical information on Sima Qian and his father, see chapter 130 of the *Records* (Shiji, hereafter SJ), in Sima Qian, *Shiji* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), 3285–3322; and Zhang Dake, *Sima Qian pingchuan* (Nanjing: Nanjing Daxue, 1994). ♣

See Nicolas Zufferey, "The Ru Under Emperor Wu's Rule," in *To The Origins of Confucianism: The Ru in Pre-Qin Times and During the Early Han Dynasty* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2003), 295–357; Gu Jiegang, *Qin Han de fangshi yu rusheng* (Shanghai: Qunlian, 1955); Marianne Bujard, "Le 'Traité des Sacrifices' du Hanshu et la mise en place de la religion d'État des Han," *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* 84 (1997): 111–27; Nagai Mizuhito, "Zenkan Butei ki no Taizan Mindô kensetsu ni gan suru ichi kosetsu," *Tôyô no shisô to shukyô* 20 (2003): 98–110. ♣

See Michael Nylan, *The Five "Confucian" Classics* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001). ♣

Michael Loewe, "The Authority of the Emperors of Ch'in and Han," in *Divination, Mythology, and Monarchy in Han China* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1994), 85–112. ♣

Chosen from the extremely rich scholarship on the topic, see Zhang Dake, *Shiji yanju*; Zhao Shengqun, *'Shiji' wenxianxue congkao* (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji, 2000); Grant Hardy, *Worlds of Bronze and Bamboo: Sima Qian's Conquest of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Michael Nylan, "Sima Qian: A True Historian?," *Early China* 23–24 (1998–1999): 203–46; Stephen W. Durrant, *The Cloudy Mirror: Tension and Conflict in the Writings of Sima Qian* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995); and Wai-yee Li, "The Idea of Authority in the Shih Chi (Records of the Historian)," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 54(2) (December 1994): 345–405; and Li Changzhi, *Sima Qian zhi renga yu fengge* (Taipei: Liren shuju, 1949). ♣

Michael Puett has analyzed discontinuity in the *Records* in anthropological terms in his groundbreaking *The Ambivalence of Creation: Debates Concerning Innovation and Artifice in Early China* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2002). Many scholars explain Sima Qian's pessimism in light of his castration that followed the Li Ling incident, and on the disputed letter to Re An (HS 62, 2725–38), which some consider a work of literary impersonation. On historiographical trends in early imperial China, see On-cho Ng and Q. Edward Wang, *Mirroring the Past: The Writing and Use of History in Imperial China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), 1–79. On debates about the relationship between Chinese literary heritage and the functionality of historiography, see Conrad Schirokauer, "Chu Hsi's Sense of History," in *Ordering the World: Approaches to State and Society in Sung Dynasty China*, ed. R. Hymes and C. Schirokauer (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 193–220. ♣

SJ 28, 1398. ♣

SJ 110, 2879. ♣

SJ 110, 2892. The Records associates the Xiongnu with the constellation of the Western Palace and with the Pleiades—the Xiongnu were ultimately part of the same universe as the Central States; see SJ 27, 1305. ♣

SJ 110, 2879. ♣

SJ 110, 2898. ♣

SJ 1, 11; SJ 40, 1659. ♣

See Gopal Sukhu, “Monkeys, Shamans, Emperors, and Poets: The Chuci and Images of Chu during the Han Dynasty,” in *Defining Chu: Image and Reality in Ancient China*, ed. Constance E. Cook and John Major (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2004), 145–65. ♣

Frank W. Walbank, *Polybius* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 3. ♣

On the history of the Achaean League, see Frank W. Walbank, *Aratos of Sycion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933); and Robert M. Errington, *Philopoemen* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969). ♣

Lycortas, as Military Commander (*hipparchos*), was selected as a member of the Achaean embassies to Rome and Alexandria in 188 BCE. In the subsequent decades, Lycortas was many times the head of the Achaean League as *stratêgos*. See Craige B. Champion, *Cultural Politics in Polybius’s ‘Histories’* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 16–17. ♣

On Polybius in Rome, see Andrew Erskine, “Polybius among the Romans: Life in the Cyclops’ Cave,” in *Imperialism, Cultural Politics & Polybius*, ed. Christopher Smith and Liv Maria Yarrow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 17–32. ♣

For an overview of Polybius’s life, see Walbank, *Polybius*, 6–13; and Champion, *Cultural Politics*, 15–18. ♣

Walbank, *Polybius*, 7–8. On the issue of the “annexation” of Greece by Rome after the sack of Corinth, see Robert Kallet Marx, *Hegemony to Empire: The Development of the Roman Imperium in the East from 148 to 62 B.C.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 42–57. ♣

Pausanias, the Greek geographer of the second century CE, could report of monuments celebrating Polybius’s activity as mediator between Greece and Rome scattered throughout the Hellenic world. See Champion, *Cultural Politics*, 18. ♣

Of the forty books of the *Histories*, only the first five survive in a complete form. On the timing of the composition and publication of the *Histories*, see Walbank, *Polybius*, 13–31. On the different phases of Polybius’s appraisal of Rome’s military conquests and “imperialism,” see Walbank, *Polybius*, 157–83. According to Walbank, Polybius’s attitude towards Rome becomes less immediately intelligible in the narration of the events following the battle of Pydna in 168, as he has to account for the efforts of the Achaeans to maintain their independence and for Rome’s shrewd treatment of the vanquished. On this topic, see Domenico Musti, *Polibio e l’imperialismo romano* (Napoli: Liguori, 1978), 69–148. ♣



See Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges, *Polybe ou la Grèce conquise par les Romains* (PhD diss., Faculté des Lettres de Paris, 1858), 1. For the encounter of Rome and Greece, see Erich S. Gruen, *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). ↗

On the issue of Polybius's readership, I follow Champion's argument, summarized in *Cultural Politics*, 4. F. W. Walbank instead considers Polybius's intended public to have been mainly Greek, as he states in *Polybius*, 3–6, 16–19. See also Josephine Crawley Quinn, "Imagining the Imperial Mediterranean," in *Polybius & His World*, 337–52. ↗

On the meanings of πραγματική ιστορία in Polybius and on his historiographical approach, see Walbank, *Polybius*, 66–96; see also Paul Pédech, *Le méthode historique de Polybe* (Paris: Université de Paris, 1964), 331–54. ↗

On Polybius's relationship with the Hellenic historiographical and rhetorical traditions, see Walbank, *Polybius*, 32–65; Riccardo Vattuone, "Timeo, Polibio e la storiografia greca d'occidente," in *The Shadow of Polybius: Intertextuality as a Research Tool in Greek Historiography*, ed. Guido Schepens and Jan Bollansée (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 73–88; Mario Attilio Levi, "La critica di Polibio a Timeo," *Studi Alessandrini* 196 (1963): 195–202. ↗

Pédech (in *Le méthode historique de Polybe*, 331–54) singles out the following causal factors in the Hellenic historiography and in Polybius: influence of individuals, the character of political institutions and military expertise, geography, and fortune. Polybius (*Hist.* III, 5–7), in the analysis of the origin of war, famously expounds his theory based on the distinction among origins (ἀρχαί), causes (αἰτίαι), and alleged motives (πρόφασεις). ↗

This is the theme of book VI of the *Histories*. See Andrew Erskine, "How to Rule the World: Polybius Book 6 Reconsidered," in *Polybius & His World*, 231–46. See also Clifford Ando, "Was Classical Rome a Polis," *Classical Antiquity* 18 (1999): 13. ↗

See Champion on Book 6, 66–99; Jules Nicolet, "Polybe et les institutions romaines," *Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique de la Fondation Hardt* (Genève: Vandoeuvres, 1974), 209–65. ↗

Champion (in *Cultural Politics*, 30–31) defines the use of the concept of "Hellenism" in Polybius and among contemporary Greek intellectuals as a cultural strategy devised to counter Rome's power. On the development of a pan-Hellenic identity and on its different (instrumental) formulations in different historical contexts, see Champion, *Cultural Politics*, 31–40; see also C. P. Jones, "ἔθνος and γένος in Herodotus," *Classical Quarterly* 46 (1996): 315–20. ↗

Champion, *Cultural Politics*, 4. ↗

Arnaldo Momigliano has pointed out that although Polybius was the only Greek historian to resort to the notion of cycles, he only did so with regard to the evolution of constitutions, for he did not include ordinary military and political events in this



vision. See Momigliano, "Persian, Greek, and Jewish Historiography," in *The Classical Foundation of Modern Historiography*, 18. ♣

Hist. I, 2–3. ♣

Polybius acknowledges the work of Ephorus of Cumae as the first to attempt a general history; see Hist. V, 33, 2. ♣

Julia Ching and Willard G. Oxtoby, *Moral Enlightenment: Leibniz and Wolff on China* (Sankt Augustin: Institut Monumenta Serica, Nettetal, Steyler, 1992); Basil Guy, *The French Image of China before and after Voltaire* (Geneve: Institut et Musee Voltaire, 1963); François Quesnay, "Historie Sommaire de Confucius," in *Le despotisme de la Chine*, Eleutherian Mills Historical Library, Winterthur Manuscript, group 2, series E, (Berlin, 1972), 60–72. ♣

See Iggers and Wang, *A Global History*, 48. ♣

See Sabbatucci, *La prospettiva*, 200–34. For an original and compelling philosophical disambiguation of the concept of Heaven, see David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, "Tian and Dao as Nontranscendent Fields," in *Thinking from the Han: Self, Truth, and Transcendence in Chinese and Western Culture* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998). Stephen F. Teiser, "The Spirits of Chinese Religions," in *Religions of China in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 3–37; David L. Overmyer, David N. Keightley, Edward L. Shaughnessy, Constance A. Cook, and Donald Harper, "Chinese Religions—The State of the Field, Part I; Early Religious Traditions: The Neolithic Period Through the Han Dynasty (ca. 4000 B.C.E. to 220 C.E.)," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 54(1) (February 1995): 124–60. ♣

See Lillian Lan-ying Tseng's *Picturing Heaven in Early China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011). ♣

In Mencius (ca. 372–289 BCE), the role of Heaven is also connected to the moral nature (xing 性) of men; see Robert Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven: Philosophy and the Defense of Ritual Mastery* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990), 99–130. Tianming has been traditionally translated as "Mandate of Heaven." David Schaberg argued that "Heaven's Command" is more appropriate; see David Schaberg, "Command and the Content of Tradition," in *The Magnitude of Ming*, ed. Christopher Lupke (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), 23–26. ♣

The origins of the term tian are obscure and it is still very difficult to ascertain to what extent it was an original Zhou creation or was instead already a Shang deity. For a summary of the influential theories about tian's origins and meanings by Herrlee G. Creel (who considered Tian the collectivity of the rulers of the past living in Heaven) and Shima Kunio (who interpreted tian as the sky, a sky-god, or the altar of that god), see Robert Eno's "Appendix A," in *The Confucian Creation of Heaven*, 181–86. See also Herrlee G. Creel, *The Origins of Statecraft in China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), vol. 1: 497–504; and Shima Kunio, *Inkyo bokuji kenkyū* (Hirosaki: Chūgokugaku Kenkyūkai, 1958), 174–86. Eno (*The Confucian Creation of Heaven*, 186–89), on the basis of his philological analysis, sees tian also as the destination of the

ashes of the sacrificial victims. Sarah Allan through a re-examination of the debates presented above, has recently interpreted tian as both a natural phenomenon and in connection with dynastic ancestors; see Sarah Allan, "T'ien and Shang Ti in Pre-Han China," *Acta Asiatica* 98 (2010): 1–18. On the connection between Heaven and sacrifice, see Sarah Allan, "Drought, Human Sacrifice and the Mandate of Heaven in a Lost Text from the Shangshu," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 47(3) (1984): 523–39; Michael Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), 205–10. ♣

On Shang ancestral cults, see Robert Eno, "Was There a High God Ti in Shang Religion?," *Early China* 15 (1990): 1–26; "Deities and Ancestors in Early Oracle Inscriptions," in *Religions of China in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 41–51. ♣

Translation in Arthur Wailey, *The Book of Songs/Shijing* (New York: Grove Press, 1996), 228 (Wen Wang 文王 毛235). ♣

"The Book of the feng and shan Sacrifices," in the *Records*, chronicles the history of imperial legitimation in China from its origins to Emperor Wu; see SJ 28. ♣

On Emperor Wu's struggle with court classicists, see Itano Chôhachi, *Chûgoku kodai ni okeru ningenkan no tenkai* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, Shôwa, 1972). ♣

See Michael Loewe, "K'uang Heng and the Reform of Religious Practices (31 B.C.)," *Asia Major* 17(1), part 2 (1988): 1–27; Watanabe Yoshihiro, "Sacrifices to Heaven in the Han and the Theory of Six Heavens," *Acta Asiatica* 98 (2010): 43–75. ♣

It can be argued that the authors tended to treat remote events whose knowledge derived from archival materials more respectfully, whereas they were more critical or ironic in recounting facts about which they had a more direct knowledge. ♣

The assumption that Emperor Wu's ceremonies were addressed univocally to Heaven is based on later historiography such as the "Jiaosi zhi" 郊祀 (Hanshu, 25). For a complete translation and study of the "Jiaosi zhi," see Marianne Bujard, *Le sacrifice au Ciel dans la Chine ancienne: Theorie et pratique sous les Han occidentaux* (Paris: Ecole française d'Extreme-Orient, 2000). ♣

SJ 49, 1968. Cf. Confucius, Lun Yu, Weiling Gong, 29. ♣

See Nancy Lee Swann, Pan Chao, *Foremost Woman Scholar of China, First Century A.D.* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1968). ♣

SJ 49, 1968. ♣

As a regent Lü issued ordinances (zhi 制) stamped with her own seal, which was fashioned in jade and engraved with terms exclusively associated with the emperor; see Qin Bo, "Xi-Han huanghou yüxi he Ganlu ernian tongfanlou de faxian," *Wenwu* 5 (1973): 26–29. ♣

SJ 9, 412. "Internal evidence" about the fact that Sima Qian considered Lü's rule legitimate might be elicited from the very structure and "numerology" of the Shiji. As noted by Mark Edward Lewis, the number twelve in the benji might symbolize cosmic completion; see M. E. Lewis, "The Feng and Shan Sacrifices of the Emperor Wu of the

Han," in *State and Court Ritual in China*, ed. J. P. Mc Dermott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 20–50. According to some scholars, criticism toward Lü's reign was expressed through a conspicuous increase in the registration of astrological phenomena. Whether such indirect attacks came from the historians or from the officers has been the object of a heated debate between Hans Bielenstein and Wolfram Eberhard; see Hans Bielenstein, "An Interpretation of the Portents in the Ts'ien Han Shu," *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 22 (1950): 127–43; "Han Portents and Prognostications," *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 57 (1984): 97–112; and Wolfram Eberhard, "The Political Function of Astronomy and Astronomers in Han China" *Chinese Thought & Institution*, ed. J. F. Fairbank (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 33–71. ♣

SJ 8, 348. ♣

SJ 8, 348. On cloud divination, see Michael Loewe, "The Oracles of the Clouds and of the Winds," in M. Loewe, *Divination, Mythology, and Monarchy in Han China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 191–213. ♣

SJ 8, 391. On Xiao He, see Michael Loewe, *A Biographical Dictionary of the Qin, Former Han & Xin Periods* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 603–05. ♣

SJ 8, 343. ♣

SJ 48, 1949. ♣

SJ 48, 1950. ♣

*Ibid.* ♣

*Ibid.* ♣

*Ibid.* ♣

*Ibid.* ♣

*Ibid.* ♣

SJ 8, 347. ♣

SJ 8, 344. On the contrary, Liu's aristocratic rival Xiang Yu, when a boy, upon seeing Qin Shihuangdi for the first time, expressed the desire to depose and replace him; see SJ 7, 296. ♣

On the symbolism of colors and on their association with the Han, see Michael Loewe, "Water Earth, and Fire: The Symbols of the Han Dynasty," in *Divination*, 57–60. ♣

SJ 8, 347. ♣

SJ 7, 322. ♣

SJ 97, 2699. My translation is based on B. Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian*, 1: 226–27. ♣

SJ 8, 381. ♣

SJ 16, 760. ♣

SJ 97, 2694. ♣

See J. J. Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 2–9. ♣

See Emma Stafford, "Personification in Greek Religious Thought and Practice," in *A Companion to Greek Religion*, ed. Daniel Ogden (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 71–86; Liz James, "Good Luck and Good Fortune to the Queen Cities: Empresses and Tyches in Byzantium," in *Personification in the Greek World: From Antiquity to Byzantium*, ed. Emma Stafford and Judith Herrin (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), 293–305; Ernst H. Gombrich, "Personification," in *Classical Influences on European Culture AD 500–1500*, ed. R. R. Bolgar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 247–57. ♣

Tyche would be idiomatically associated with Alexander the Great and his incredible successes by Plutarch (46–120 CE) in the oration "On the Fortune or the Virtue of Alexander." See Plutarch, *Moralia* (Oxford: Loeb Classical Library, 1936), vol. 4: 319–77. ♣

Nicole Balaiche, "Tychè et la Tychè dans le cites de la Palestine romaine," *Syria* 80 (2003): 111–38. ♣

See Jacqueline Champeaux, *Fortuna: recherches sur le culte de la Fortune à Rome et dans le monde romain des origines à la mort de César* (Roma: Collection de l'Ecole française de Rome, 1982); Ferdinando Castagnoli, "Il culto di Mater Matuta e della Fortuna nel Foro Boario," *Studi Romani* 27(2) (1979): 145–52. ♣

Livy I, 39, 1: While a child named Servius Tullius lay sleeping, his head burst into flames in the sight of many (see also Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 4.14, 3–4). On Augustan reforms and their connection to the Servian tradition, see Mary Beard, John North, and Simon Price, *Religions of Rome: Volume I, a History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 184. ♣

Livy I. 39–41 (I, 41,3; "qui sis, non unde natus sis": Consider what you are, not whence you were born). ♣

As for the rhetoric construction of Etruscan women as a foil to the modesty of Roman matrons, see Larissa Bonfante, *Etruscan Life and After Life: A Handbook of Etruscan Studies* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1986), 232–33. ♣

Plutarch, "On the Fortune of the Romans," *Moralia*, 383. ♣

Hist. I, 4, 1–2. Frank W. Walbank, *Polybius* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972); Polybius, *Rome and the Hellenistic World: Essays and Reflections* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). On Tyche in Polybius, see Frank. W. Walbank, *Historical Commentary on Polybius* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), vol. 1: 16–26; Paul Pédech, *Le méthode historique de Polybe* (Paris: Université de Paris, 1964), 331–54. Also see Musti, *Polibio e l'imperialismo romano*; and Champion, *Cultural Politics*. ♣

On Polybius's relationship with past historiography, see Walbank, *Polybius*, 32–65.

♣

The starting point of Polybius's narration is the 140th Olympiad in 220 BCE. These are, in the author's opinion, the fundamental events: "In Greece, what is called the Social war: the first waged by Philip, son of Demetrius and father of Perseus, in league with the Achaeans against the Aetolians, in Asia, the war for the possession of Coele-

Syria which Antiochus and Ptolemy Philopator carried on against each other. In Italy, Libya, and their neighborhood, the conflict between Rome and Carthage, generally called the Hannibalian war. My work thus begins where that of Aratus of Sicyon leaves off." See Hist. I, 3. ♣

Momigliano, *The Classical Foundations*, 44–53. ♣

Momigliano refers in particular to Hermann Ulrici, *Charakteristik der antiken Historiographie* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1833). ♣

For this reconstruction, see, Frank. W. Walbank, "Supernatural Paraphernalia," in Walbank, *Polybius, Rome and the Hellenistic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 250–51. ♣

Hist. XV, 20, 1–4. ♣

In this passage, the word choice tells us that for Polybius, Tyche could represent a hostile force, in this case almost as capricious as the gods of the Homeric tradition; see Hist. I, 1,2. literally, "to bear the changes of Fortune with a noble composure," "τὰς τῆς τύχης μεταβολὰς γενναίως ὑποφέρειν." ♣

Walbank, *Commentary on Polybius*, 16–17. ♣

*Ibid.*, 17. ♣

For Walbank's critique of Polybius's concept of causality, see *ibid.*, 1:17; and also Walbank, "Supernatural Paraphernalia," 245–57. On Polybius and causality, also see Peter S. Derow, "Historical Explanation: Polybius and his Predecessors," in *Greek Historiography*, ed. S. Hornblower (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 73–90; P. S. Derow, "Polybius, Rome and the East," *Journal of Roman Studies* 69 (1979): 1–15. ♣

Hist. XXXVI, 17: τῶν πολλῶν δόξαις. ♣

Hist. II 20. ♣

Hist. VI, 56. ♣

See "Libro Primo" (Book One): XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XV, in *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio*, (Torino: UTET, 1999), 507–17. ♣

From the Eastern Han the institutionalized interpretation of omens as fundamental elements of the official doctrine of the Mandate of Heaven will be extremely important for promotions of officials. ♣



## Local Optima: The Importance of Comparing Small Decisions in the Making of Large Empires

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**Abstract:** This essay is a response to Marsili's "The Ghosts of Monotheism: Heaven, Fortune, and Universalism in Early Chinese and Greco-Roman Historiography." By examining the problems of large-scale comparison, the concepts of "local optima," "semblance," and "complex adaptive systems" are explored. Despite reservations about the ability to conduct large-scale comparative projects like this, the essay argues that Marsili's project is successful because he compares processes instead of traits in the development of Greco-Roman and Chinese historiography.

Like many scholars, I am suspicious of large comparative projects in the study of religion. The study of large "world religions," like the study of empires, is such a large and diverse subject that comparative projects have the tendency, despite the efforts of their authors, to over-generalize. Departments rarely hire comparativists, and I consistently warn my graduate students that comparative work is often seen as superficial and best left to senior scholars who have big ideas, lots of experience, and, frankly, nothing to lose career-wise. It's worth noting that comparative scholarship of the best kind is usually only nominally comparative, as scholars often play to their own strengths. An expert on Southeast Chinese ritual from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries might attempt to write a large comparative study on Buddhist ritual but will favor Southeast Chinese ritual evidence from that time period. A specialist in early Sri Lankan Buddhist texts might have a tendency to view the rest of Buddhist Studies from a pre-modern Pali textual perspective. I tend to view Buddhist Studies through a textual perspective colored by my language skills and training in Thai and Theravada Buddhism. Furthermore, scholars often compare beliefs, doctrines, and concepts on the one hand, with institutional structures, on the other. Practical everyday happenings get lost as a scholar's gaze grows broader. As a student, I compared big things like two religious traditions' views on soteriology and the afterlife, or two traditions' understanding of the nature of the human person and opinions regarding the existence of evil.[1] Still, being a detailed-oriented scholar, I quickly grew dissatisfied and intimidated by broad comparisons. I just did not have the detailed knowledge in two different traditions, time periods, historical contexts, or language families required to

make the types of rigorous comparisons that I idealized. As a result, I soon gave up comparison as a practice in general. It was not until recently, while working on Buddhist architects from Japan who design religious structures in Nepal and Thailand, that I returned to comparison. In this regard, Filippo Marsili's article has been very sobering and helpful.

With the publication of Marsili's "The Ghosts of Monotheism: Heaven, Fortune, and Universalism in Early Chinese and Greco-Roman Historiography," I now have a model of comparison, which I can show to my students and use to guide my work. Marsili examines the role of the concept of Fortuna in the account of the formation of the early Roman empire in the Histories of Polybius (200–118 BCE). He compares Fortuna to the concept of tian (often translated as heaven or god), as found in the portrait of the formation of the Han empire in Sima Qian's (145?–86 BCE) The Records of the Grand Historian. By looking closely at the historical writings of Sima Qian and Polybius, he shows that the study of religion is not as a "meta-historical" assumption or explanatory tool for understanding major tragic events, profound existential questions, or broadly agreed-upon historical shifts. Instead, to these writers, religion was neither a meaning-making system, a series of socio-ethical assumptions, nor a conceptual justification for the existence of institutions, but rather a problem-solving technology deployed in specific instances to particular ends. Marsili actually shows the importance of the study of religion by demonstrating how these historians discounted its importance in legitimating the founding of the Chinese and Roman empires. In doing so, he challenges the view of religion promoted by Bellah, Durkheim, and many others, namely, as the belief in a singular, sacred power, that ascribes meaning to human actions and institutions. According to Marsili, such a view is not very useful for comparing two historians who saw religion as being very much concerned with the here and now. By looking at these two historians comparatively, Marsili is no longer looking at belief. Marsili instead focuses on what Lorand Matory calls the "proximate mechanisms" of knowledge change and continuity.[2] He shows that the study of religion is essential to the study of history, because it is akin to the study of the history of science, literature, art, or even sports. Religion is a highly effective and stimulating human pastime, absolutely fundamental to how humans form allegiances, describe enemies, and construct legal systems—and it is not merely an ethereal and cerebral meaning-making system relegated to quiet cloisters and hilltop sanctuaries, or an internally consistent doctrinal system that is enacted systematically by well-managed ecclesia. This broad reflection on the role of religion in the historiography of two vastly different empires shows the possibilities and benefits of comparison.

There are very few scholars like Marsili who can work with both Greek and Chinese materials seriously. With these language skills, Marsili shows that the study of religion can be very useful for the study of two widely different cultures if we study the series of choices that two groups of people make in very specific circumstances rather than comparing their larger belief systems or fully-formed teachings. In this way, Marsili

renders the comparison as the practice of studying choices rather than traits, processes as opposed to doctrines. Approaching comparative studies in this way allows us to begin to break out of what Arjun Appadurai calls the study of “trait geographies,” or the examination of the “inherent properties of peoples, soils, [and] cultures.”[3] Nations and peoples are seen as “clusters of traits.” Marsili sees processes in a different way—not as the ways in which different empires “act” under similar socio-historical circumstances and with similar material, climatic, and demographic advantages and limitations, but rather as the historiographical processes in which empires explain themselves.

To accomplish this, Marsili follows the methods of the two historians, thereby avoiding a notion of a “universalistic, super-ethnic religion that propounded the unity of the metaphysical, moral, and empirical realms.”[4] Instead of comparing the universalistic claims made by the glorious leaders of two empires, he compares how the best-known historians of these empires determined universalism: namely, the imperial decisions that put into process their universalist ambitions. The concept of “semblances” is useful here I believe. As Ulrich Timme Kragh has noted, comparison in modern Western literary theory involves four components of language: “comparatum, comparandum, semblance, and comparative phrase.”[5] These correspond to terms used in Sanskrit literary theory (*alanḱāraśāstra*), which were often used by Buddhist thinkers and writers: *upamāna*, *upameya*, *sādhāraṇadharmā*, and *upamāpratipādaka*. For example, Kragh writes,

In the comparison ‘The water sparkled like diamonds,’ the ‘diamonds’ are the comparatum (*upamāna*), i.e. the poetic image or object to which the water is compared. ‘The water’ is the comparandum (*upameya*), i.e. the subject of the comparison. ‘Sparkled’ is the semblance (*sādhāraṇadharmā*), namely the common quality of the comparatum and the comparandum, whereby the comparison is enabled. ‘Like’ is the comparative phrase (*upamāpratipādaka*) that effects the comparison.[6]

The semblance is the “quintessence of any comparison” because it unites “the image with its subject.”[7] Marsili focuses on the “semblances.” This allows him to compare verbs, not nouns. Sima Qian, the author of *The Records of the Grand Historian*, who was castrated under the orders of Emperor Wu, is important not necessarily for what he described, but for showing that the process of creating a unified empire “represented the realization of selfish interests via violence and scheming rather than the victory of a superior moralizing will.” “Through individual and collective biographies, annals, chronological tables, and monographic essays” his history “accounts for multiple subjectivities in a multifaceted narrative that complicates the recognition of straight lines of historical causation.” He demonstrated that “historical causes are to be sought beyond grandiose proclamations and official truths.” Similarly, Polybius did not conclude through the description of how divine will and fortune worked in Roman history that “the world must make sense as a whole,” and did not

"conceive the extra-human realm, 'the divine,' as intrinsically fair, coherent, or as One."

In this way, Marsili implicitly works against another common vagary that results from large comparative studies—the creation of ideal exemplars. Sima Qian and Polybius are perhaps the two greatest historians of their respective empires and have been relied on by historians for decades as primary sources. However, Sima Qian and Polybius do not create ideal exemplars or simply praise the roles of their founding emperors or tutelary deities in the unification of their empires. Biographies, whether of objects, places, or people, or in this case historians, have the tendency to promote the idea that there is such a thing as an independent entity and in turn make that person, place, or thing an ideal exemplar. This is compounded when the historians being compared were part of the process of creating the very idea of an empire through their craft. The creation of a series of exemplars, representatives, or the reviving of the "great man" approach to history posits that history is moved along by certain creative, tenacious, or trailblazing outliers. Marsili shows that Sima Qian and Polybius didn't create these exemplars or idealize the empires themselves. They saw empires as what I would call complex adaptive systems. Empires are made of agents and these agents are part of heterogeneous, dynamic, flexible, process-oriented, and ever-changing synchronic and diachronic networks.[8] They are complex, not just complicated. As computational modeling specialists John Miller and Scott Page state, "complexity is a deep property of a system, whereas complication is not. A complex system dies when an element is removed, but complicated ones continue to live on, albeit slightly compromised. Removing a seat from a car makes it less complicated; removing a timing belt makes it less complex (and useless). Complicated worlds are reducible, whereas complex ones are not." [9] The historians show that Emperor Wu or Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus might have been important parts of complex systems, but did not single-handedly create those empires. Moreover, these empires are not founded upon unified religious or cosmological ideals. Therefore, neither the leaders nor the religious concepts are ideal exemplars and necessary components to the system. In turn, Marsili shows, through a comparative biography of the historians, that they are also not ideal exemplars but "go-betweens," who were part of the process of creating the ways in which the empires are remembered.[10] They are not world leaders, spiritual masters, or once-in-a-generation philosophers. In fact, they could be called failures. When compared, these in-between agents are much more representative than the "great men" of history and teach us more about what is probable rather than what is simply possible.

Still, there is a problem with looking at agents, or, in this case, the historians and the leaders that they elevate, through the approach of computational models design by sociologists and social engineers. They have a tendency to focus on outcomes. Their systems model biological and mechanical behavior to produce solutions to issues of inefficiency, heat loss, reduced profits, or material stress. In my own humanistic work,

epitomized by a forthcoming study of Buddhist architects, I am not and have not been concerned much with outcomes. I practice a woefully inefficient and unprofitable craft. I am not really concerned (although I understand why other, more social scientifically and managerially-minded scholars would be) with studying ideal exemplars that successfully achieve optimal outcomes—great books, paradigm-shifting buildings, revolutionary theories, and inspirational epitaphs. Instead, I look at how certain agents, in my case, architects who attempt to represent Buddhist teachings in their building designs, and in Marsili's case, historians attempting to explain the formation of empires, "get stuck at local optima." [11] They settle on a series of small "goods" and abandon the optimal "perfection" that they initially wanted to reach in the end. Along the way, many agents have to develop alternative plans or, in computational-speak—"low-level adaptive algorithms"—and give up ideal outcomes or overarching models. [12] Through Sima Qian and Polybius, Marsili shows that sometimes lives and material creations are simply products of a series of local optima.

Marsili's article is a complex system itself. It shows us that the process of comparing the processes of different historians creating histories of dissimilar places doesn't necessitate concluding with a taxonomy of differences or similarities about the qualities of leaders, the material, social, economic, climatic, and demographic conditions of the empires themselves, or the belief systems of different religious traditions. Instead comparative religious historiography reveals that empires and even the after-the-fact historical descriptions of their emergence are characterized by a series of decisions by a diverse group of agents aimed not at fulfilling ideal notions of destiny or identity, but rather settling on local optima.

#### Notes

1. His views on comparison have been a subject of inspiration and debate for over thirty years and are discussed in numerous publications. Two places that provide an accessible overview are Jonathan Z. Smith, "A Matter of Class: Taxonomies of Religion," in his *Relating Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 160–78; and his "In Comparison a Magic Dwells," in *Imagining Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 19–35. Kimberley Patton and Benjamin Ray (eds.) provide an overview of the impact of Smith's work on comparison and new approaches to comparative religion in *A Magic Still Dwells* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000). ↗
2. Lorand Matary, *Black Atlantic Religion* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), introduction. ↗
3. Appadurai presented this publicly at the Association of Asian Studies in 1997. I provide an example of this type of study in my *Gathering Leaves and Lifting Words* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008). ↗
4. Filippo Marsili, "The Ghosts of Monotheism: Heaven, Fortune, and Universalism in Early Chinese and Greco-Roman Historiography," *Fragments* 3–4: 44–78, 46. ↗



5. Ulrich Timme Kragh, "Of Similes and Metaphors in Buddhist Philosophical Literature: Poetic Semblance through Mythic Allusion," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 73(3) (2010): 479–502, 481. ↗
6. *Ibid.*, 481. ↗
7. *Ibid.*, 482. ↗
8. John Miller and Scott Page, *Complex Adaptive Systems* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), 79. ↗
9. *Ibid.*, 9. ↗
10. See, for example, Alida Metcalf's *Go-betweens and the Colonization of Brazil, 1500–1600* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005). Simon Schaffer, Lisa Roberts, Raj Kapil, and James Delbourgo, eds., *The Brokered World: Go-betweens and Global Intelligence, 1770–1820* (Sagamore Beach, Mass.: Watson Publishing International, 2009). ↗
11. Miller and Page, *Complex*, 81. ↗
12. *Ibid.*, 82. ↗

## Commentary on “The Ghosts of Monotheism: Heaven, Fortune and Universalism in Early Chinese and Greco-Roman Historiography”

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**Abstract:** This commentary on Marsili’s “The Ghosts of Monotheism” confines itself to some general observations on the theoretical claims of the article. While it is in full agreement with the author on the need to historicize “religion” in studies of pre-modern and non-Western histories it also suggests that this task, far from not being undertaken, has been very much at the forefront in disciplines that are either directly dealing with religion, such as religious studies, or with the problem of what constitutes “history”, in the study of say, pre-modern South Asia. The commentary, therefore, suggests that, rather than being an inter-disciplinary problem, the lack of historicization of “religion” might well be an intra-disciplinary one.

The paper, rich in a comparative perspective, attempts to show, through its detailed analysis of early histories of both the Chinese and the Greco-Roman worlds at the turn of the first pre-Christian millennium that we have historiographies from that period that adopt radically different approaches to that of post-Christian historical writing traditions. In showing this, the author suggests, we can not only question the “hegemony of monotheism” that underlies “Western” history writing but also, more crucially, interrogate the links a monotheistic universalism establishes between “religion and moral, ethnic, and national identities.” Further, such an interrogation would, instead, foster a truly intercultural approach that eschews ethnocentrism. The commentator on this paper is not an expert on either Chinese or Greco-Roman historiography apart from being well aware that a great deal of rich scholarship exists on both Sima Qian and Polybius. Nevertheless, as someone whose own work on pre-modern South Asian, more specifically South Indian, Tamil religion is strongly informed by an interest in the historiography of religions, I would like to confine myself to some general observations that pertain to the theoretical claims of this article.

To return to Polybius and Sima Qian, the analysis of their historiographical approaches in this article yields rich insights regarding historical narratives and the ways in which the stories of people in pre-modernity are told. Thus, the author shows

us that there existed widely differentiated ways of considering the history of societies, depending on one's location. For Polybius, dealing with the rise of Rome at the turn of the first millennium, the emergence of new political realities seemed to necessitate a new kind of god but one who "constituted an intermediate stage towards a rationalistic refutation of the role of the divine in history" (Marsili 2014: 66). The figure that seemed to fulfill this purpose was Tychê, or Fortune, who tests men's skills and capacities even while allowing events to converge to one end. In Sima Qian, by contrast, if "Heaven" is the ordering principle then the author is at pains to stress that it has to be understood as serving different functions in different contexts. Thus, it can even be that, "it does not present any extra-human connotation. It is an empty word that can be used to glorify one's contingent aims. It is connected to adaptability and receptiveness rather than to constants and absolutes" (Marsili 2014: 62).

In the final analysis, the author suggests that neither Polybius nor Sima Qian conceived of "a universalistic, super-ethnic religion that propounded the unity of the metaphysical, moral, and empirical realms. Their worldview was not influenced by monotheism or by its conscious rejection" (Marsili 2014: 46). So far, so good. As extensive studies of the epic texts of India such as the Mahābhārata have shown (Van Buitenen 1973; Hiltebeitel 2011; Fitzgerald 2004)—if we are to acknowledge the historical aims of texts such as these—then we must also acknowledge that the coherence of the narrative framework, like that of Polybius or Sima Qian, does not rely on monotheistic principles. In an epic like the Mahābhārata too, destiny or daiva functions to hold together the plot as much if not more than divine, monotheistic interventions. In other words, cross-cultural analyses of non-Judeo Christian historically or semi-historically intended texts reveal many points of similarity regarding non-Abrahamic paradigms of historical writing. Therefore, one could hardly take exception to the author's call for a historicization of "religion" as a precondition perhaps for cross-cultural, historical analysis. The charge though, of the lack of historicization, would have been better substantiated in this paper if the author could have shown how this has affected, say, previous analyses of the very materials he has worked on for this paper.

The author suggests that a great deal of historical interpretation falls short of historicizing the concept of "religion" itself, being driven by some of the implicit striving for teleological coherence and an understanding of "religion" that is based on the Judeo-Christian or Abrahamic models. There is little to argue with the soundness of this theoretical proposition. Nevertheless, and this is the main point I wish to make, being someone who works both in the field of religious studies, on non-Judeo Christian traditions as well as on pre-modern South Asian literatures, one can hardly avoid the paradigm shift that has taken place in the study of "religion" with the deconstruction of both the concept itself as well as its historical formations. A recent example of such a deconstruction would be the work of Arvind Mandair (2009) on the emergence of the modern Sikh religious identity, which builds on the theorization of others on the

concept of “religion” such as that of King (1999), Masuzawa (2005), McCutcheon (1997), and Fitzgerald (2000), to name a few. A second sort of development, not unrelated to the matter at hand, inasmuch as it deals with the issue of historical writings in pre-modernity, is the kind of historical scholarship that probes the construction of “history” itself, seeking to show that texts that might be read as “history” in some pre-modern cultures would not fall within the genre of “history” as we understand it to be in modernity, let alone fulfill the latter’s implicit Judeo-Christian teleology. Here, I am thinking of the work of Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam (2003) on history writing in India in the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. What they have attempted to show is that, if facticity might be considered one of the central features of history writing, then it must be looked for, and can be found in genres other than those considered traditional to it. In other words, historians who have expanded the notion of which genres of narrative literature deal with history in pre-modernity, and have taken into account particularly narratives that are not concerned primarily with the delineation of a linear time framework, are even less likely to adopt a Judeo-Christian and monotheistic theological bias in their own scholarship. Finally, as I have shown in my own work, when histories of religions came to be written in India after the emergence of historical writing as a discipline, the historiographical approaches of traditionalist scholars, far from being an unsophisticated adaptation of Judeo-Christian teleology, were, in fact, constructed with an acute awareness of both its limitations and its dangers (Raman 2011). In summing up, I would suggest that the author’s plea for the historicization of “religion” as a prerequisite for the study of ancient and non-Western histories has long been recognized both by those in religious studies as well as those working on pre-modern historical traditions of South Asia. It perhaps just remains to be more explicitly acknowledged and dealt with by those writing or engaging with texts in the author’s own area of expertise.

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8. Rethinking Materiality, Memory and Identity





## The origin of topoformant words (nomenclature) and the geographical terms in toponymy of Zangazur area.

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**Abstract:** The geographical terms and the origin of nomenclature words of Zangazur area are analyzed in the article. It is shown the language affiliation of them. The toponyms of Zangazur area introduced in passive fund have been analyzed in the article.

**Keywords:** topoformant, toponym, geography, onomastic lexis, passive fund, dumb toponyms, aborigen, fitonomy toponyms, zoonomy toponyms, archaic toponyms

### 1. Introduction.

Since the ancient times the people have been using the geographical terms reflecting the specific features of the geographical objects that surrounded them (mountain, valley, hill and etc.). Toponymic terms played a significant role in the appearance of the geographical names. Those terms are formed on the basis of grammar rules and derivative means of each nation. Mr. E.M. Murzaullayev shows that the geographical terms is a basis of the toponyms and they play a role as modifier nomens for the creation of complex structure toponyms. Such kind of words still is not toponyms. They become toponyms when they connect to the geographical names. Generally, geographical terms are divided into two groups: Those ones which express a type and a kind of geographical name. Those ones which consist of special names and thereby become toponyms. We come across to both of the groups in the toponomic fund of investigated Zangazur area. There are such geographical objects that used only to express the type of geographical

objects (kənd, dərə, selav, yal, belçay and etc.) and meanwhile, there are the others that became a geographical object without geographical nomen (For example: dağ, Tap, Balık, Kəpəz, Kömür, Oyuq, Pir, Pul, Tas, Tala, Cil, Arxac, Zor, Şırnıx). Oronym and hidronym is a sphere of the topography that generally reflects the terms being introduced in toponymic creation. Zangazur has also got its own ethnic diversity as well as Azerbaijan ethnic diversity. And it is natural that an ethnic diversity of Zangazur area is represented more and less in Azerbaijani ethnic diversity. The Turkish toponymic terms are also divided into two groups: Ancient Turkish origin terms (all -Turkish) Azerbaijani origin terms. Despite of semantics of some part of Turkish-Azerbaijani origin toponyms is not represented in Azerbaijani language and dialect anymore; it still exists in some amount in the structure of toponyms. Those toponyms (toponymic terms) are a great fact from the historical point of view. And, an instigation of the similar ones in the other Turkish languages can be helpful for a common large and precise scientific result. These geographical names (terms) are the valuable facts that disclose an identity and history of that area. Some of them are shown as follows: Balık (Balak), Yazı, Zor, Tas, Dağ, Mac, Top, Pir, Kəpəz, Şam, Kirs/Kirs and etc.

An existence of the ancient Turkish elements in toponymy of Zangazur proves so that this area were inhabited by the Turkish ethnic groups even BCE. Such kind of nomens are an expression of the people's thought in terms of time and space. Our ancient generations used the common nouns as the geographical names and made them toponyms. (For example: Balık/Balak, Top, Yazı, Dağ, Tas (kənd), Mac, Pir, Giriş). At that time, those words used as the common nouns were expressed a meaning of the household, urban and rural deals, farming deals, their belief and other features of their lifestyle. Afterwards, those words became onomastic units. Such kind of geographical terms, being the social – geographical units, are expressing the history of geography and the history of the language of our nation. That is why those toponyms are great of importance in order to identify and approve the history of the Turkish ethnic groups inhabited in that area. Thus, In Zangazur area (in a part of Armenia) a village called "Mac", no doubt, it indicates that an ancient inhabitants of that time engaged in agriculture. "Balık" is an ancient Turkish word that expresses a meaning of city, castle. "Yazı" is an archaic Turkish origin word that expresses a meaning of steppe, desert. Only being preserved in toponyms, such kind of words almost disappeared out of our vocabulary. Just taking into account above mentioned facts, complex and systematical study of the geographical terms, which is the most interesting part of Azerbaijani onomastics, is a great of importance in terms of political, scientific and historical view. Thus, one of significant reasons to study the toponyms, an important field of historical chronicle of our nation is that these types of terms reflect our historical formation, the components formed our language and the way of our ancestors. Besides, it reflects the lifestyle of the ethnic groups inhabited in

that area and their language origin. These terms are containing a lot of the valuable units that can be helpful in order to reveal an ancient lexis, lexis-semantic grammatical and phonetic features of our language. Meanwhile, being the news from the past centuries, they inform about native state of our lands, landscape, our natural resources, lifestyle and culture of our people in the ancient times. When we examine the toponomic fund of Zangazur area, we are witnessing completely of a toponomic background formed by Azerbaijani-Turkish origin toponyms. As for geographical names which introduced as non-Turkish origin words, it should be noted that, they are Arabian and Persian origin words underwent to Azerbaijani language. As for microtoponyms, it should be noted that, these types of geographical words coincide with a grammatical structure of Azerbaijani language completely. Most of those words are not used in modern Azerbaijani language. But, they still active in the names of oronymic and toponymic objects. A term: "Yazi düzü": There are the specific lexis units in Azerbaijani toponymy that most of them were used in all Turkish monuments and in other related Turkish languages. Some part of these words is archaic in terms of modern Azerbaijani artistic language which mostly used in written sources, in dialect and in accent related to Azerbaijani language. One of those units that reached nowadays as a structural part of our toponyms, is "Yazi". Oronym "Yazi" is the name of the vast steppe in Gubadli region. Being a microtoponym, that oronym even mentioned in the research work of S.P. Zelinski dedicated to the Zangazur area ("Materials for study economical household of state peasants of Caucasus region) (2,142-165 p). The word "Yazi" means a steppe, a desert, a flat and mostly were used in the ancient Turkish and Azerbaijani written monuments, including the dialect and accent of these languages. It is not only preserved in the structure of geographical names but also is still active as a geographical nomen in some dialects and accents. For instance, in some regions it appears as an independent microtoponym. It should be noted that this word, being a second component of the complicated toponyms, made a big amount of macrooronyms. For instance, we may come across to a word "Ağyazi" in Gakh region (which means small, not so big steppe), Ağca yazi" in Lachin region, "Qarayazi" in Gazakh region (which means big, large steppe). The toponym "Yazi" has been used in Jabrail region as well. Even, we may come across to that word in the structure of some oronyms in which it was distorted by a structure. For instance: "Giləzi" – "gil yazi" means a muddy steppe; "Alayazi" – means a flat steppe. It should be noted that in Orkhon inscriptions the word "Yazi" was used as an expression of a steppe. So, the toponyms are great of importance in order to study an archaic stage of the language. Zangazur area is rich of microtoponyms that reflect an archaic lexis. We can offer as a sample "Tap Gorus" region. That microtoponym used without a geographical nomen. The meaning of that is a flat ground, namely a flat ground on the hill.

So, it should be noted that, the geographical name is relevant to a location. Top – means a place surrounded by the dense forest Tas//z – means a rock. It still active in some other languages. It should be noted that all three microtoponyms have been mentioned in some Russian official documents of 19th century (2, 142 -165p) That is, each geographical object of that area has been given a name relevant to its relief. An element “Art”, being an ancient Turkish origin word in the geographical names of Azerbaijan, expresses a meaning of a plateau, a mountain passage, a span and etc. We can offer as a sample the word “Salvard” (Salvard peak) which is the name of highland plateau in Zangazur area (namely located in Sisyan region, Armenia) and “Siğirt” which is the name of the mountain in Zangilan region. It should be noted that it would be wrong to relate the word “Ard’/Art”, used in toponimic names, to the word “ard” which used in modern Azerbaijani language and expresses a meaning of backside, back and etc. A.M. Murzayev has noted that the word “Art” was mentioned in the ancient Turkish topography and he has shown a spreading areal of the words containing “art” component. For instance: Mu-art, Qizil-art, Kiz-Art, Mug – art and etc. “Parmag-barmag” geographical name: It was widely used in the ancient Turkish language and gives a meaning of a hill. We may witness such a geographical name containing a word “barmag” in Zangazur area as well. For instance, the mountains in Gubadli region such as “Barmag” and “Besbarmag”; in Lachin region mountain “Barmaglar”; in Khizi region “Besbarmaglar” mountain and in Kalbajar region “Barmaglar” hill. A term “Bək\ \bük”: Zangazur area has also geographical names containing the word elements such as “Bək\ \bük”. In the ancient Turkish language that geographical term gives a meaning of a hill, a mountain passage, a high peak and etc. There are many word combinations in Azerbaijani onomastics that containing these geographical terms. For instance, “Bük dağı” (mountain Buk), “Büktəpə” (Buk hill) in Lachin region and Bəkdaş” (Bakdash) used as Baydağ (Baidag) among the people) mountain, located in the area of Gafan region, Armenia. Besides, we can offer the terms Bakı/Bagi which fits to above mentioned meaning. For instance, the capital of Azerbaijan “Baki” located in a highland. Meanwhile, Kashagari mentioned the word “bəgi” in his works (1, 722p). He related the meaning of that word as a name of a man. A term “Balık \ \ balak”: Being an ancient Turkish word, that term gives a meaning of a city, a castle. A. Mirzoyev is also noted that this word was used for the meaning of a city, a castle. Besides, the word “balak” used as a word to express a meaning of an ethnonym in Sisyan and Sarmali regions, the territory of Armenia. The word “balak” is one of dumb toponyms that introduced in the passive fund of words of Sisyan region. M. Kashagari used that word as a name of the city, a castle. That word is considered as a member of dead Turkish used before Islam, namely it is a dead toponym. (1,540p) A term “Bair/Bayır”: The toponymy of Zangazur area is rich as much as the composition of its relief. Thus, we may come

across the word “Bair/Bayır” which means a hill, a highland, a slope. We can offer as the sample a word “Çalbayır” (Chalbayir) which is the geographical name in Gubadli region given to the highland steppe. A term “Səngər (Sangar”): That word was preserved in the ancient Turkish languages like “səngir” (sangir) and the meaning of that is a mountain cape. We can offer as a great sample for that a mountain Səngər which located in the territory of Əyin (Ayin) village, Gubadli region. The tem “Səngər” is also mentioned in the novels of S. Ragimov. Namely, therein, he has mentioned about Səngər Mountain. Besides, there is another geographical name called as “Səngərtəpə” (Sangar hill) which given to a highland located in Zangilan region. A term “Tap”: One of the toponimic names belonging to the relief forms in Zangazur area is a word “Tap”. It is located in Gorus region, Armenia. That word belonging to the relief form. However, it was used as a common noun and became a special toponymic lexis. It was used as a topoformant and being adapted to landscape, became a special onomatological unit. It is widely used areal in the dialect of this area. That word means a flat place, a flat steppe, the flatness on the hill. Sometimes, that word used in live talk metaphorically as “Tapa gəl” (come to TAP) which means “Come to a right way”. Mr. I. Byatramov has also notified that the meaning of that word is flatness, a flat place (3, 53p). That topoformant has been used in Azerbaijan and in some areas of all-Turkish nations. We can offer as a sample the geographical names such as “Ceyranlı tapı” (steppe of deer) in Zangilan region and “Köçəri tapı” (steppe of nomads) in Gabadli region. Besides, in the territory of Gurus region, namely nearly the village Shurnukhu there is a steppe called “Hürtap”. The word “Tap” out of the name “Tap Garagoyunlu” is also belonging to this group of words. A term “Top”: Being used as a private toponomic unit in the onomatological lexis of Zangazur area, this word is a geographical name that used without nomen. The word “Top” was mentioned in the calendar of S.P. Zelinski (“Materials for study economical household of state peasants of Caucasus region, like a private unit. (2,65p) Being accepted as a microtoponym, the meaning of that word is a forest, a glade. We can offer as a sample “Topbağ” forest located near by the village Seytas in Gubadli region. In Turkish language the meaning of that word fits to the word forest. This word was used in word combinations either as a nomenclature term or as an epithet. The oikonym “Topçu”, existed in the territory of Ismayilli region, was formed by the word Top, too. A term “Tas”: This appellative lexis, being used as a topoformant in the language, is a member of onomatological lexis in the Turkish origin topography of Zangazur area. For instance, there is a geographical object named by Tas that located in the territory of Armenia, namely in Gorus region. In the investigated calendar of Zelinski this word was mentioned as an oronym Taz (2, 142-165p) (“Materials for study economical household of state peasants of Caucasus region). Being the modifier word, that term was also used as a topoformant in the structure of the



geographical names of Azerbaijani-Turkish toponymy. "Tas" means a stone, a rock and a precipice. That word is introduced in the different geographical names of the different regions. For instance: in Yakutia – Tastax, Xaratas, Tas Xarqi; In Altay – Kiziltas; Kazakhstan – Taskak, tasti; All of these words express generally a meaning of stone. This word is an oronym that has been formed relevant to a relief form. A term "Dağ (Dag)": The word "Dağ" is the geographical name that expresses a positive relief structure which generally used in Turkish languages including Azerbaijani. This geographical name is still used by the different forms in Turkish languages. For instance, Dağ, tağ, tao, too, tay and etc. The geographical object Dag was the summer pasture of Azerbaijani lowland regions in the range of Gorus-SisyanNakhichevan. Each region and each village has possessed their own comps in that area. It should be noted that the geographical name "Dağ" had been mentioned like "Taq" in the Russian Official documents of 19 century ("Materials for study economical household of state peasants of Caucasus region (2,145-162p). The meaning of that word is tall and steep slope, pasture and steppe on the hill. That geographical term was widely used in the territories of Turkish speaking nations, namely it has been introduced in toponyms. For instance: in Azerbaijan – Şahdağ, Dağ Quşçu, Dəlidağ; in Crimea – Çatırdağ, Atıdağ; in Kazakhstan – Dəmirtay, Alatay; in Bashkordostan – Kırkttay. In the heroism sagas, in folklore the word Dag had been accepted like a saint term and the people worshiped to that. Geographical term Dag became constant oronym lacking of elliptic geographical nomen. A term "Daş" (dash): We can come across toponym and microtoponyms containing this geographical term in the structure of Turkish origin topography of Zangazur. It is natural. It is stipulated with a fact that Zangazur is a mountainous area and that fact caused of creation of such kind of geographical terms. Component "Daş" is used for the different meanings. The term was used in this area taking into the characteristic features of the objects, that is, a relief structure, geographical attitude, landscape and etc. It should be noted that "daş//dış" terms sometimes expressed other meanings and it is not coincide with the meaning of the present word "daş". In present Turkish languages including Azerbaijani dialect the word "dış" used in order to express a meaning of a steppe, an outside and a desert. For instance, in the word combination "Dişarı çıxmaq" (Dishari chixmag) that term expresses a meaning of an outside, outdoor. Mr. E.M. Mirzoyev has noted that a word "daş" used to express a meaning of a rock, a hill (4, 173 p.). In the territories of Turkish speaking nations there are many oikonyms with respect to a word "daş". For instance: Daşburun, Daşaltı, Daşkəsən dashkesen), Bəkdəş (bekdash) and etc. We can come across many toponyms in Zangazur area that containing a term "daş". For instance: Daşlı qat, Daş kənd (Karase), Taxtadaş, Qızıldaş, Daş başı, Saldaş, Daştın, Baydaş, Daşagırən. Above mentioned geographical names containing nomens have been mentioned by Zelinski in his research work ("Materials for

study economical household of state peasants of Caucasus region (2, 145-162 p). A term "Tey": It is an oikonym that used without a nomen in the toponymy of Zagazur area. It is a dead toponym entered to passive fund of the territory of Megri region, Armenia. It had been a name of Azerbaijani village. In 1918, that village had been destroyed and underwent genocide by Armenians. Meanwhile, in that area was a village named Tey consisting of copper mines. The ruins of that village still remain. The meaning of that word is revealed by Mr. E.M. Murzayev like a hill, a small mountain (4, 597 p.) Toponym "Teğut (Tuğut)": It is one of the oikonyms that existed in the territory of Megri region. We guess that the component teğ/tuğ used in that toponym coincides with a word tağ/tuğ/dağ either by phonetic or by linguistic meaning. The geographical name without nomen teğ/tuğ is still lives under the name of Tuğ. It should be noted that one of the geographical names without namen used in the territory of Gorus region is a word "Dığ". No doubt, that word originated from the words such as dağ, tağ, tuğ, tex which were used in the different forms. The second component in the word Teğut is "ut", being ancient Turkish affix, expressed a meaning of a space. In Gafan region, there was a village with a name called "Tuqanlar". In this word were used three components: Tuq+an+lar; the first component coincides with a derivative tağ/tuğ/dağ; the second component "an", being a topoformant affix in Turkish languages, expresses a meaning of a space; an affix "lar", being an origin affix of our language, expresses a meaning of a plurality. The all components used herein are belonging to AzerbaijaniTurkish languages. Being a dumb toponym, the word Tuqanlar introduced in passive fund of words. It was happened in the result of genocide, made by Armenians. Such kind of toponyms is a great of importance in terms of study the history of our language. The names of the villages in Lachin region such as first Tuguk and second Tuguk, namely the elements "tug"/tig is also belonging to this family of words. A term "Xek" (Khek): That toponym was used in Zangazur area. We can come across to that oikonym in the work of S.P. Zelinski dedicated to Zangazur region (2, 142-165p) "Materials for study economical household of state peasants of Caucasus region). Even, I. Chopin has mentioned that oikonym like "Xok" in his works dedicated to the settlements of 19th century. He considered that the village Xok is one of the ancient villages of that area (located in Sharur region). We think that Xek and Xok used by Zelinski and Chopin are the oikonyms of the same origin under the different phonetic covers. E. M. Murzayev noticed in his works that in Turkmen language this word expresses a meaning of a groove occurred in the result of rain and snow waters; in Altai languages Xek means a dry and a solid ground; In Kazakh language it means a small pond. That term became archaic for Azerbaijani language. For that reason it stayed unknown in some amount. However, it became a member of passive fund of words and had been preserved in the structure of the onomastic lexis. A term "Qat": That toponym lacking of

nomen was also used in Zangazur area. E.M. Murzayev has used this term in two meanings: 1. First meaning is a swamp (4, 14p) 2. Second meaning is a settlement, a house, a village, a city, a castle (4, 263p) There are different names containing that term in Gubadli region that reached our times. S.P. Zelinski ("Materials for study economical household of state peasants of Caucasus region") also mentioned about that in his works. Namely he used the names Small Qat, Big Qat, Stony Qat for the winter camps located nearby the village "Alyanli" (belonging to a tribe Alyanli) that term, herein, expressed a meaning of a settlement, house, village, castle. The component "qat" used in the name of the village Mərzqat of the Megri region (Armenia) is also belonging to that term. Qat/kat components of the toponyms Tunqat, Daxqat, Navkat used in the territories of Turkish speaking nations are also expressing the same meaning and belong to the same family of words. A term "Düz": It is a geographical term that belonging to the group of words expressing the meanings of relief forms. There is a winter camp under that name. It is located in Armenia and until 1926 it was inhabited by Azerbaijanis. That term means a steppe, a flatness, a field without groove. No doubt, it is Turkish origin word. It was in the structure of the different toponyms. We can come across that word either in the first form of modifier word combination or in the second form of modifier word combination. For instance: Böyükdüz, Düzkənd, Uludüz, Gəyəndüzü and etc. There are different types of objects and therefore, their formation, expression and geographical nomen features are different from each other. Being a topoforment, that word is introduced in the formation of the objects with the negative relief structure. It is also used as a private toponym, for instance: Düz; like the first part of the toponym: Düzkənd (flat village); like the second part of the toponym: Böyükdüz, Uludüz, Gəyəndüzü. The toponym "Gəyəndüzü", being a word containing a phytonym character, is ascribed to the blackthorn plant. (göyən means a blackthorn and the all together they mean a steppe of blackthorn)

A term "Mac": Toponomic terms play a significant role in the appearance and formation of geographical names in the territory of Azerbaijan. In this respect, we can offer a name "Mac". That name belongs to the family of oikonomic geographical terms that appeared in Gorus region of Zangazur Area. It was the name of the village inhabited by Azerbaijanis. In the result of genocide, Azerbaijani inhabitants had been expelled out of that village and that oikonym went to passive fund. In the calendar of Zelinski, the name of that village mentioned as "Matç" (like Russian version (2, 145-162p) ("Materials for study economical household of state peasants of Caucasus region"). We guess that this toponym is reflection of a professional occupation of our ancient people. Being used without nomen, this toponym belongs to the agricultural sphere. "Mac" is the name of the tool of the people engaged in farming. Afterwards, it was entered onomatological lexis and used like the toponym. So, that term first used

as the appellative lexis belonging to agricultural sphere and then it was used as the toponym. Entering to our archaic lexis, this word became toponym being used without nomen.

It is well known that the geographical names are long-lived. They live for centuries and even, sometimes their ages reach over millennium. The historical-public process plays a significant role in overall development of the language. Namely, it has an influence on changes of word fund (it can bring about either archaization or renovation). All toponyms of any area can undergo change (an archaization or a renovation). For instance, only in the territory of Armenia, most of Turkish-Azerbaijani origin toponyms underwent a change until 1988, and in subsequent periods they all have experienced a change. Actually, that process was a state policy in Armenia and it has been realized in various ways such as a resettlement of the village population, unifying of the villages or a new name replacement. The opinion of Abu Reyhan al Biruni, the great scientist of the 11th century, is interesting in this regards. He wrote: "The names undergo a change when the alien tribes occupy any territory" (1- II). Besides, the Russian toponymist Nikonov said accordingly: "The geographical name is a great witness showing by whom it has been given" (1-II).

It should be noted that the Republic of Armenia is the territory that the most of the Turkish origin toponyms are introduced in this area. And the region Gorus of this area is considered a territory that underwent most village and population destruction. Therefore, the region Gorus is considered as a territory that owns the biggest amount of dumb toponyms introduced in the passive fund. The dumb toponyms of Gorus region which underwent a change are shown below:

Alçalı (Alchali) – was a name of Azerbaijani village located in Zangazur (Gorus) territory of Ganja province. The ruins of that village still remain and you can find them nearby the village Agbulaq. The inhabitants of that village have been destructed during the genocide by Armenians in 1918.

Abbaslar – is also a village located in the territory of Gorus region. It was the village belonging to Azerbaijanis. The toponym became a member of the passive fund when the village was destroyed by Armenians.

Abbas dərəsi kəndi (Abbas deresi kendi) – is an Azerbaijani village located in Zangazur (Gorus). It is located in the right shore of Agoglanli branch of river Hakari.

Alyanli (first) – is an Azerbaijani village located in Gorus region. 714 Azerbaijanis were lived there in 1886. They all became victims of Armenian genocide and the name of the village became a dumb toponym. We suppose that this name take its origin from Albanli/Agvanli tribe.

Alyanli (second) – is also an Azerbaijani village which destroyed by Armenians like the first one in 1918.

Agafli – is a member of dumb toponyms of Zangazur (Gorus) area.

Aynaxli – was a winter camp in Gorus region. At present, it is a dead village and the ruins of that still remain.

Amudux – was the village of Azerbaijanis located in Zangazur (Gorus) area of Ganja province. It was destroyed in 1907 and the ruins of that still remain.

Bəzli Ağcakənd (Bezli Agjakend) – is also an Azerbaijani village located in Zangazur area of Ganja Province. We suppose that the first part of this compound toponym Bəz+li is taking its origin from the mountain name “Bəzz”. Herein the sound “Z” acts in pairs and it is relevant for Arabian language. But, Mr. G. Genybullayev notified that the word Bəz, being Turkish origin word, expresses a meaning of a peak, upright rock. It is a keepsake from Babak period (Babak Khoramdin, revolutionary leader in 798). (2, 28)

Babali Qayali – is the village of Azerbaijanis. The name is a member of the passive fund. There is also a village named by Qayali in Gubadli region. It seems, the first part of the name, the epithet Babali appeared based on principle of lanes. That toponym is also ascribed to Turkish tribe Qayi.

Baba Yaqublu – is one of Azerbaijani villages in Zangazur area. The name is a member of dumb toponyms. During 1907 the inhabitants of that village was consist of 1901 people. It is a toponym by compound structure.

Balli Qaya – was an Azerbaijani village in Zangazur area, in Gorus region. It was an oikonym with an epithet character and formed as a subordinate phrase. That village was destroyed by Armenian bandit gang leader named by Andronik. Armenians translated this oikonym into Armenian language and call it as “Megraklar”.

Bababelli – was the name of Azerbaijani village in Gorus region. This name is a member of dumb toponyms. The second part of this compound toponym “bel” was used as a nomenclature term.

Bağırbəyli (Bagirbeyli) – was the name of Azerbaijani village located in the upper part of river Hakari of Ganja province. It is a geographical name with a compound structure. It consists of components as follows: Bağır + bəy + li

Bayandur (I, II) – are the names of Azerbaijani villages. One of them was destroyed completely during the genocide act by Armenians and hereinafter it was renamed into Baqadur. The second Bayandur village was destroyed completely by Armenian bandit gang of one-eared Adronik. Bayandur is the name of one of the ancient Turkish tribes. That name has been reflected in all “Oguzname”s.

Beşbarmaq (beshbarmag) – was the name of winter camp. The inhabitants of that place were Azerbaijanis. This name is a toponym with the compound structure and it belongs to dumb toponyms.

Qara Gədik (gara gedik) – is the name of Azerbaijani village located in Zangazur area (Gorus region) of Ganja province. In the result of the genocide act by Armenians it became a dead village. The name has compound structure and it is a toponym in the form of subordinate phrase.

Boz Kaha – was the name of Azerbaijani village which underwent destruction in 1918. This name is a compound toponym in the form of subordinate phrase.



Qalaq – was the name of Azerbaijani village in Gorus region. At present, it was renamed and called as “Vaqadur”. The name is a member of passive fund.

Kürdlər (kurdler) – was an Azerbaijani village. You can find its ruins nearby the village “Yayici”. The inhabitants of this village have been sacked in 1948 and the village was totally destructed.

Kavur Qalası – (Kavur castle) – is a castle located nearby the village “Garavunj”. It is a toponym with the compound structure. It was formed as a 1st type determiner phrase.

Gəlinçə dağı – (Gelinje galasi) – is located among Zangazur mountain chain nearby “Bazachay” (Bazar river). There is also a mountain and a legend under name “Gəlin qaya”.

Gölcük (Golchuk) – is the name of Azerbaijani village, located on the upper flow of Bergushad river. It is a dead village. That word is the compositional toponym and consists of two word parts such as Göl + cük.

Güney (Guney) – is a dead village. It was a winter camp.

Giləkarlı (Gillekerli) – is the name of village located in Zangazur area. It is also introduced in passive fund of language.

Mac-Qarışiq (Maj-Garishig) – was the name of Azerbaijani village. The inhabitants of that village were Azerbaijanis which have been sacked from that territory.

Əbdülülər (Abduliler) – was the name of Azerbaijani village located in Zangazur area. The Azerbaijanis have been lived there until 1918. This toponym introduced in passive fund of the language in the reason that the Armenians was destroyed that village.

Əkərli (Akerli) – was an Azerbaijani village in Gorus region. It is correlated to the word “Həkəri” (Hakari is a village in Gubadli region. It takes its origin from the river Hakari). That word is introduced in the group of dumb toponyms.

Əli-Qulu (Ali-Gulu) – was the name of Azerbaijani village in Zangazur area. At present, Armenians have renamed it into “Azatashen”.

Ərəbxana (Arabkhana) – was the name of Azerbaijani village, located in Ganja province of Zangazur area. It was ruined in the result of Armenian genocide in 1918.

Əhmədağı (Akhmeddagi) – is an Azerbaijani village. The name related to the group of dumb toponyms.

Xanazək (Khanazek) – is the name of Azerbaijani village. It became a member of dumb toponyms.

Şahverdilər (Shakhverdiler) – was the name of Azerbaijani village. The village was ruined by Armenian during the genocide act.

Most of genocide acts by Armenians were made during the twenties of 20th century. Even, since the Soviet State established in Armenia, most of inhabitants of Azerbaijani villages underwent genocide have not returned to their native lands. Hence, in the administrative-territorial division book were registered only the names of four Azerbaijani villages such as Shurnuxu, Agbulaq, Shamsiz, Qurdulaq. In 1988,

Armenians have also destroyed those villages and its population. So, all Azerbaijani villages of Gorus region became the dead villages and the names of villages became the members of the group of the dumb toponyms. Only in Gorus region, there were forty abounded Azerbaijani villages that underwent genocide. Indeed, it proves the real face of the genocide made by Armenians which was either a moral or a corporal. Armenians have started this repellant policy in all directions which were implemented gradually and consistently.

The toponyms of sisyan region introduced in the passive fund: Up to 1988 year genocide the toponymic fund of Zangazur area was divided into two groups. The first group of toponyms was still active and carrying out the function of the address. And the second group of toponyms introduced in passive fund like dumb ones in the result of village destructions, renaming and etc. Most of Turkish-Azerbaijani origin toponyms in Zangazur area (generally in all Armenia) have been renamed irrelevantly for no valid reasons.

Turkish-Azerbaijani origin toponyms had superiority in the toponymy of the ancient Turkish-Oguz lands, Zangazur area (Sisyan region). This scene was totally changed when the Soviet State was established. At that time, many of Turkish-Azerbaijani toponyms became dumb toponyms in the reason that Armenians disliked them. In this respect, we consider important to present the dead toponyms of that region (Sisyan region). They are shown below:

Ağ kənd (Ag kənd) – this geographical name was mentioned in the research work of S.P. Zelinski (252, 142-184). The name of that village was renamed to Ashotavan in the result of total occupation of Armenian inhabitants came from Xoy and Salmag provinces of Iran.

Aşağı Ağ körpü kəndi (Ashagi ag korpu) – was located in the shore of Hakari river. We guess that this geographical name takes its origin from a tribe name “Ağ körpü”.

Armudlu – is the name of Azerbaijani village. Up to 1918 the inhabitants of that village were Azerbaijanis. It is a dead village. It also was mentioned in the research work of Zelenski.

Arxli (I, II) – are the names of Azerbaijani villages which underwent destruction in the result of attack of Armenian gang band of Adranik. Both villages are dead villages.

Ariqlı – is located in the left shore of Bazachay river in Sisyan region. It was the village of Azerbaijanis. It is a dead village. It is an ethnotoponym and it was mentioned in the reserch work of S.P. Zelinski as well. We made a wide essay about it.

Bazarçay (Bazarchay) – was the village of Azerbaijanis. The name of that village was renamed to Vorotan.

Bazarkənd (Bazarkend)- is located in Sisyan region. It is a dead toponym. It was mentioned in the research work of S.P. Zelinski. It is a member of passive fund. (1, 142)

Baş kənd (Bash kənd) – was an Azerbaijani village. Due to Degree dated 1946 it was renamed to Barchrevan and became completely the village of Armenians. At present that name is a member of passive fund.

Batar/Padar – is a dead village in Zangazur area. The ruins of that village still remain and you can find it in the shore of the river Min.

Baybali – was located nearby Soluflu village. It is a dead village and mentioned in the research work of S.P. Zelinski (1, 142-165)

Boz kənd, ( boz kend) – was an Azerbaijani village which was located nearby Agudi village. It was mentioned in the research work of S.P. Zelinski.

Bələk-Balak – was a village inhabited by both Azerbaijanis and Armenians. In a subsequent periods the village was only consist of Armenian inhabitants. It is an ancient Turkish word which mentioned in the research work of S.P. Zelinski.

Qivraq – is a member of passive fund. It is the name of the village which was destroyed by the Armenian bandit gang of Andronik.

Qalacıq – is a village, located in Zangazur area. (Namely in Sisyan region). Thak toponym was renamed to Spandaryan. It is a dead village and was mentioned in the research work of S.P. Zelinski.

Dərə kənd – is a dead village. It is located nearby Agudi River. It was mentioned in Zelnski's work.

Dulus – is an Azerbaijani village. After the attack of Armenian bandit gang of Adronik the inhabitants of that village became Armenians.

Əlili (Alili) – was an Azerbaijani village which renamed to Salvart in 1946. At present, it is a village inhabited by Armenians. The name became a member of passive fund.

Əlişir (Alishir) – is the name of Azerbaijani village. Azerbaijani inhabitants of that village have been removed to the village "Sofulu"

Əziz pəyəsi – (Aziz peyesi) – was an Azerbaijani village. Since the village was ruined, the name became a member of the passive fund.

Əlkəri (Alkari) – is the name of village located in Sisyan region. The inhabitants of that village were Azerbaijanis. The name is member of the passive fund.

Zabahadur – was an Azerbaijani village and the ruins still remain nearby the village Ahlatyan. It was also destroyed by the bandit gang of Andronik. After that the name became a member of passive fund. You can find that name in the research work of S.P. Zelinski (2, 142-165)

Yaqubi – was the name of the village of Azerbaijanis. It is a dead village.

Yuxarı Ağ Körpü (it should be noted that in this area there are three villages under this name which takes its origin from a tribe name Ağ Körpü). It is a dead village as well as the others.

Kürdlər (kurdler) - is a dead village. It was destroyed by Armenians.

Gözəl dərə - (Gozel dere) – is a dead village. You can find its ruins nearby village "Sheki"

Gomur – is also a dead village. You can find it nearby village Sheki

Məliklər – is a dead village which destroyed by Armenian bandit gang.

Sayali – is also a dead village and also was destroyed by Armenian bandit gang.

Pulkənd – (pulkend) – is an Azerbaijani village and was located nearby the village Sigat. It was destroyed by Armenian bandit gang of Adronik. At present, you can find the remnants of its graveyard.

Püsək (Pusek) – is the village of Azerbaijanis. It was destroyed in 1918 by Armenians. It was mentioned in the research work of S.P. Zelinski. Some part of its inhabitants had been removed to the village Sofulu. It is a dead village.

Sultanli – was the village of Azerbaijanis located in Sisyan region of Zangazur area. It is a dead village.

Təzə kənd – (Teze kənd) – was the village of Azerbaijanis. It is a dead village.

Hortgiz – is the name of Azerbaijani village. It was located nearby village Arafsa. That village was destroyed completely by Armenian bandit gang of Adronik. It also was mentioned in the research work of Zelinski (2, 142- 164)

Şamb (Shamb) – is the name of the village. That village was inhabited by both Armenians and Azerbaijanis. Later on Azerbaijanis have been removed from that village. It is located nearby the village Vagudi.

Şükər (Shuker) – is name of the village belonging to Azerbaijanis. It was located nearby the village Sagat. It is a dead village. This name has also mentioned in the research work of Zelinski.

The Toponyms of Kafan Region Introduced in the Passive Fund: One of the regions of Zangazur area of Ganja province was a region Kafan / Qapan. The region Kafan was divided into the different districts and semi districts as below:

Sunik district

Ecanan district

Qapan district

Vecekan district

Qapan area contained the districts mostly inhabited by Azerbaijanis. For instance, only 26 out of 130 villages were belonging to Armenians. The rest ones were Azerbaijani villages. (3,131) The aborigines of that region were Azerbaijanis. In 1639, the territory of Qapan region including the other regions of Zangazur area went under governance of Iran on basis of agreement between Turkey and Iran. In 1805, that territory was occupied by the Russian empire. At that time, a big number of Armenians have been moved to that area and since then Zangazur had been called as “Armenian ancient land”. Since that time many Azerbaijani - Turkish origin names had been changed and the region Qapan has experienced the similar unpleasant fate as well as whole Western Azerbaijan. Up to 1988, there were many dumb and dead toponyms in Qapan region. It is a great of importance to identify the origin of those toponyms in terms of study of history of our language and geography. In this respect, we present you below the dumb toponyms of that region:

Abbas dərəsi – (Abas deresi) – is one of Azerbaijani villages located in the territory of Zangazur area. It became a dead village and the name has entered the group of dumb toponyms.

Ağgöl (Ag gol) – was the name of the village located in Ecanan district of Qafan region of Ganja province. There was also the lake under the same name. It is a dumb toponym and has a compound structure.

Anabad – is the name of the village located in the shore of river Sav. The ruins of that have remained up to recent times.

Almaliq – was the name of Azerbaijani village. The village was destroyed by Armenians in 1918.

Araliq – was the name of Azerbaijani village. That village was located nearby the village Ohchu. The inhabitants of that village were burnt inside of mosque during the genocide acts. It is a dead toponym.

Armudlu – is the name of the village and the river in Qafan region. The village is considered as a dead village.

Arxüstü (Arckustu) – is the name of Azerbaijani village, located nearby the village Yuxari Giretag in Qafan region. That village was burnt by Armenians. The name has a compound structure.

Axtaxana – was the name of the village inhabited by both Azerbaijanis and Armenians. In 1940 it was renamed to Zorista. That name is a toponym which takes its origin from the name of the tribe.

Alqiz – is the name of Azerbaijani village. In 1918 the inhabitants of this village were burnt during the genocide acts. The name is a toponym with the compound structure.

Badabar – is the name of the dead village. That village was destroyed by Armenians.

Baldırganlı – is the name of the dead village. The ruins still remain. That oikonym has also become a victim of Armenian vandalism.

Bəkdaş – was the name of Azerbaijani village. In the result of unpleasant policy of Armenians that the village unified with another and the inhabitants have been removed.

Bogazciq – (Bugaciq) – is the name of the dead village. This name is a member of the passive fund.

Bıx – (Bikh) – is the name of the village. That village was inhabited by Armenians and Azerbaijanis. (It should be noted that Armenians from all mixed inhabited villages have been colonized in this village)

Gavarxana – is the name of the dead village in Zangazur area. The ruins of that village still remain in the territory of Ecanan district.

Gapiciq – is the name of the village of mixed inhabitants. It is located in the shore of the Ohchu River. Ohchu is the name of one of the personages in saga “Kitabi - Dede Gorgud”.

Qarabaşlar (Garabashlar) – is the name of Azerbaijani village. The inhabitants of the village have been removed to the village Baharli. That is why this name became a dead toponym. Being the policy of Armenians, the removal has been fulfilled deliberately.

Qara kəndi (Gara kendi) – is the name of the village. It is a dead toponym.



Qatar – was the biggest Azerbaijani village in Gafan region. The village was burnt by Armenians (the inhabitants of the village were burnt inside of mosque).

Qacakdin – is a dead toponym. You can find the ruins of the village nearby river Ohchu.

Daş Nov (Dash Nov) – is the name of Azerbaijani village. It was destroyed by Armenians in 1918.

Dərməzir (Darmazir) - was the name of Azerbaijani village. It is located nearby the village Kigi. In the subsequent periods it was used as a winter camp.

Ərəbəlz (Arabalz) - is the name of the dead village. The toponym takes its origin from Arabian name.

Əskilum (Askilum) - was the name of Azerbaijani village. This toponym shares the similar roots with the word Əskilli (Askilli). The village is located in the shore of the Əskilli river. It should be noted that “Əskil” is the name of one of the ancient Turkish tribes.

Zeyvə (Zeyva) - is was the name of the Azerbaijani village. The village was unified with the other villages under the name of Əcili (Acili) Soviets and in the results it became a dumb toponym. It should be noted that this toponym owns an areal character.

Yeməzli (Yemazli) – is the name of Azerbaijani village. It is a compositional toponym. The inhabitants of that village have been removed to villages Ohdar and Helece.

Yamaxli – is the village name. The remnants of its graveyard still remain. It is also a toponym with the compositional structure.

Yeylaxli – is the name of Azerbaijani village located in Zangazur area. It was destroyed in 1918. At present, it is a dead toponym. The name was given to the village in the form of word used in spoken language.

Suxan (Suhan) – is the name of Azerbaijani village. It is a dead toponym.

Taxta (tahta) – is a village. The ruins of that you can find nearby the village Xələc (Helej).

Tacəddin (Tajeddin) – is the name of Azerbaijani village. It also became a dead toponym.

Tunis – is the name of the village inhabited by Azerbaijanis. It has become a dead toponym and the roots of that word still unknown.

Turabxanlı – is the name of Azerbaijani village. In the result of Armenian genocide it has become a dead toponym. It is a toponym with the compound structure.

Tut Pir Qislagi – The ruins of that village still remain and you can find it nearby the village Ohchu. It is a toponym with compound structure.

Tuqanlar – is the name of the village. The inhabitants of that village were Azerbaijanis.

Xatin bagi – is the name of the village. You can find its ruins nearby village Zeyve. It is a dead toponym with syntax structure.

Xiş (Hish) – is the name of the village. It is located nearby villages Baharli and Gigi. The name is a dead toponym. It has a simple structure.

Çanaxçı (Chanahchi) – is the name of Azerbaijani village. It is an ethnotoponym which takes its origin from the profession name. It is a compositional toponym.

Çatılı düzü (Chatili duzu) – is the name of Azerbaijani village. It is located nearby the village Ohdar. The toponym owns syntax structure.

Çullu (Chullu) – is the name of Azerbaijani village. In 1930, the inhabitants of that village have been removed to another village and the village was cancelled. It is an ethnotoponym which takes its origin from the ancient Turkish tribe name “Çullu”.

Cibili – was the name of Azerbaijani village. The village was unified with another villages under the name of Garachimen Soviets and therefore, the name became a dead toponym. It is a compositional toponym.

Şər dəre (Sher dere) – is the name of the village. You can find the ruins of that nearby the village Helej (Xələc). The name is a dead toponym with the syntax structure.

Şotalı (Shotali) – is the name of Azerbaijani village. It was located in the right shore of the river Ohchu. It has also become a dead village.

The structural and etymological analysis of the dumb toponyms of Zangazur area introduced in the passive fund proves that they all are Azerbaijani and Turkish origin. It is a great of importance to study the geographical names from the point of scientific and political view. Thus, being the pages of the ancient chronicle of our nation and language, the geographical names are reflecting the formation process of our history, the factors took part in the formation of our language, our geographical history and the ways of our ancestors, the ancient phonetic - lexis and semantic – grammatical features of our language.

Some part of Azerbaijani people has lived in the lands presently called Armenia. Willy nilly they gave the names to the geographical objects where they live. And, it is natural that they used the words from their native language. Most of those names have been reflected in the different historical written monuments of the different periods. So, in the study process of Azerbaijani origin toponyms is a great of importance to study the toponyms reflected in the different written monuments of the different periods.

2. Result: Generally, there are many geographical names in the toponymy of this area with respect to geographical terms and topoformants.

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## Book Review

TRACY IRELAND AND JANE LYDON

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This special issue of Public History Review considers how places, landscapes, remains and objects – in the past and in the present – produce identity and memory. The material world both reflects and shapes sensory, affective and embodied experiences of memory and identification. Current thinking about heritage and the archaeology of the recent past challenges archaeological paradigms, advocating a new, ethnographic approach centred on the meaning of the past and its remains in the present. This work opens up an exciting new space for discussion and debate about archaeological, historical and heritage work concerned with memory and identity.

### THE MATERIAL TURN

This volume contributes to a distinctively object-oriented approach within archaeology and heritage that focuses on the relationship between people and things. The recent ‘material turn’ may at first sight appear all too familiar to archaeologists: after all, its emphasis on the ways that material things and places shape human life have been known to the discipline since the 1970s via the work of scholars associated with the anthropologically-inspired approach of Daniel Miller, who have argued that things make us as much as we make things.<sup>1</sup> The concept of things possessing social lives of their own has been deployed in the concept of ‘object biographies’.<sup>2</sup> Such analyses also help us understand the materiality of the object and how its effects upon the human subject may be seen as another, crucial stage in its life story. Igor Kopytoff’s object biography approach continues to be applied in tracing the ‘life’ of an object from its manufacture across its various uses, exchanges and effects. There is an enduring fascination in exploring the life of objects.<sup>3</sup>

However, over the last decade or so, an anthropologically-informed approach to knowledge construction has focused more explicitly on the active role of the non-human in shaping life, an interest that signals a shift in analysis from what things or images mean, to what they do.<sup>4</sup> Instead of focusing on the semiotic or social meaning given to things, many scholars across a range of disciplines are now exploring the social effects of the material, regarding things as actors in a social field that makes no distinction between human and non-human actants.

Most often associated with a posthumanist approach derived from Latour’s Actor Network Theory, an effect of this approach is to de-centre human agency and explore how meaning and effectivity is constituted across networks that include non-human actors. It has been taken up by those concerned with breaking down the Cartesian opposition between nature and culture, tangible and intangible, subject and

object.<sup>5</sup> Critiques of humanism and Cartesian dualisms that ground it have argued that all distinctions between the material and the social are the effect of techno-social practices, rather than the reflections of an underlying ontological reality. This reorientation, sometimes termed the 'new materialism', conceives of 'matter itself as lively or as exhibiting agency', and allows us to see human action and history within active processes of materialization.<sup>6</sup> In attempting to overcome the enduring separation between thing and meaning, concrete and abstract, physical and mental, scholars have sought to re-focus attention on the materiality of social life and to show that the relationship between people and things is mutually constitutive.<sup>7</sup> In questioning distinctions between objects and ideas, concepts and things, new methodologies are emerging that promise to overcome the traditional separation between fieldwork and analysis.<sup>8</sup>

This renewed concern with materiality can also be traced in recent literature and art, particularly since the late 1990s. Zuzanna Jakubowski has suggested that although this is often interpreted as a reaction to the rise of the digital, and a yearning for the authenticity of the 'real', she sees these avant-garde forms of realism as seeking to constitute an affective experience in themselves, rather than a representation of reality.<sup>9</sup> Diverse recent works such as Orhan Pamuk's *The Museum of Innocence*, the loving family chronicle of Edmund de Waal's *The Hare with the Amber Eyes*, to the Marxist speculative materialism of China Mieville's novels, all freely delve into the affective economy of objects. In discussing Orhan Pamuk's focus on mass produced, every day objects, such as salt shakers and ashtrays, in the *Museum of Innocence*, Jakubowski suggests that this 'illustrates the Latourian democratic creation of meaning and reality by human and non-human actors alike – the salt shakers might be man-made but at the same time they possess a life of their own'.<sup>10</sup>

Roland Barthes' 1968 essay 'The Reality Effect' linked the rise of literary realism and materialism in the nineteenth century – for example, authors such as Balzac and Flaubert – with the contemporaneous rise of a range of realist practices, including 'objective history', and materialist practices, such as photography, archaeology, tourism and museum collecting, where materials were collected to produce a world-ordering narrative.<sup>11</sup> Aligning this new interest in the material with the non-representational allows us to make a link between the preoccupations of the 'new materialism' and emerging new approaches to heritage, archaeology and collecting practices, which move away from human-centred world ordering, to explore the embodied, affective experience of material and social worlds.

#### EMOTIONAL PASTS

A concern with materiality joins with the recent scholarly interest in the history, political effects and cultural role of emotions.<sup>12</sup> Sometimes termed the 'affective turn', such research has defined emotions, or 'felt judgements', as embodied feelings experienced in the context of cultural values and principles.<sup>13</sup> This field is premised on the argument that emotions, including their bodily dimensions, are culturally and



historically determined, rather than biologically based and common to all humans. Although they have a neurological basis, they are learned and expressed in different ways according to social and temporal context.

In this view, emotions are as important in understanding the past as other social categories such as class, race and gender. They may be collective, historically created and locally contingent, and respond dynamically to circumstance, response or refusal in systems of circulation and exchange that Sara Ahmed terms 'emotional economies'.<sup>14</sup> Such practices constitute 'objects of feeling' – those toward whom we feel pity, anger or love.<sup>15</sup> An interest in emotions emerged in the context of broad theoretical shifts such as postmodernism with its scepticism toward grand narratives, self-reflexivity in interpretation, a related emphasis on language and discourse and a concern with gender and power in the reconstruction of past societies.<sup>16</sup>

In our own time, a politicised commitment to exploring inequality, and to understanding our own 'positioned subjectivity', may also constitute a productive source of critical engagement, including approaches such as 'auto-ethnography' that have allowed us to scrutinise our methodological and theoretical presuppositions and procedures, and myriad, otherwise overlooked aspects of archaeological, historical and heritage praxis. In addition, a focus upon our own engagement with the stuff we study contributes to our understanding of materiality: for example, in helping us understand relationships between humans and the material world through devices such as object biographies. Such processes may challenge Western ontologies and transcend traditional Western oppositions, such as the division between object and meaning. Finally, such an approach forces us to re-visit long-standing historiographical questions of empathy and its place as a heuristic device in understanding others.

Such concerns are linked to the anthropology of archaeology, sparked by an interest in the socio-political context of knowledge production that began during the 1970s. Such studies argued that science is not an objective set of techniques or principles but rather a culture, and that the objects of scientific study are socially constructed.<sup>17</sup> Archaeologists have long argued for attending to their own disciplinary culture, especially in conducting fieldwork. Lynn Meskell notes that attention to the hybrid communities and discourse around such research de-centres 'the past' as a privileged locale and re-orientes analysis in terms of the present and 'how archaeology works in the world'.<sup>18</sup> As Tracy Ireland's contribution to this collection insists, our response to heritage objects relies upon a 'visual code of authenticity' and on a history or narrative framework that is intimately related to political cultures. However, we must also recognize our identification with the sensuous and exotic past has its limits.

#### THE PAST IN THE PRESENT

Merging heritage and ethnographic practices allows the exploration of the meaning of the past in the present, the politics of practice and contemporary debates focused on the material traces of the past. In their discussion of archaeological ethnography, Hamilakis and Anagnostopoulos emphasise the significance of this approach in

challenging the assumptions and authority of 'conventional' archaeology, and acknowledging a diverse range of interests in and ways of comprehending and narrating the past.<sup>19</sup> Attention to the fine-grained experience of fieldwork – or 'deep hanging out', to use Clifford Geertz's phrase – shows how 'humans, non-humans, things, and their places of encounter become the context in which archaeological knowledge is co-created and produced'.<sup>20</sup>

Steve Brown's contribution to this issue is a wonderful example of a lovingly detailed autoethnographic exploration of identity and belonging. He explores 'the phenomena of identity from my perspective of home and memory as experiences elicited, provoked, invoked and creatively imagined through encounter and entanglement with the "field site" and "found objects"'. Steve explores his identity as an archaeologist and how it is constituted within entangled webs of relationships with places and things that give meaning to his understanding of his own personal heritage.

In contrast, Erin Gibson ventures out to explore how memory is accumulated around place, as the indigenous Stl'atl'imx (pronounced Stat-lee-um) people of the lower Lillooet River Valley, in British Columbia, Canada, aim to preserve a colonial wagon route as a strategy for decolonizing and reclaiming their traditional territory and identity. She also looks in detail at the road's importance to a group of Grade 10 students who experience the wagon trail as part of a high school excursion, focusing on how the embodied experience of moving through this landscape is incorporated into their understandings of their own identity and their own future.

Tracy Ireland gets 'up close and personal' with two archaeological sites conserved in situ, comparing the 'Big Dig' archaeological site conserved in situ in Sydney, Australia, with the Pointe-à-Callière Musée d'archéologie et d'histoire in Montreal, Canada, in order to explore how these material encounters appear to 'create stable objects of memory and identity from a much more contingent and complex matrix of politics, social structures, and the more-than-human materiality of the city'. In particular, she argues that understanding heritage 'as a material structure for the "accumulation of affect"', and of how people feel heritage and the past through aesthetic and sensuous experiences of materiality and authenticity, bring us closer to understanding how heritage is seen to sustain identity and memory.

In contrast to the previous articles which focus on the sensuous materiality of archaeological remains and fieldwork in their many forms, Jane Lydon considers the webs of relationships that enmesh significant early photographs of Australian Indigenous people, arguing that through their materiality they exert a living power for descendants and for the nation as a whole. She charts the transformation of collections from anthropological data, to archives, to Aboriginal heritage, and considers the various roles and impacts prompted by their digital transformation and mobilization – from positive strengthening of families and identities to the riskier re-enactment of colonial stereotypes. She notes that 'visual technologies have always provided diverse and mutable conduits for transmitting images around the globe. Australia's first 1840s

photographs of Aboriginal people, for example, were daguerreotypes, singular metal mirrors that could not be shared unless transformed into engravings and printed by a press into a publication'. While digitization offers powerful opportunities for re-connecting family networks and telling the truth of Indigenous experience, she describes the careful, intensive research and consultation that is required to do this without reifying identity and tradition.

Finally, Ralph Mills' charming evocation of the mysteries of his mantelpiece, explores mass-produced objects, such as ceramic figurines, that may have been displayed on mantelpieces in working-class nineteenth and early twentieth-century houses, which he has encountered in archaeological contexts around Manchester in England. 'Above the hearth, at the heart of the home,' he writes, 'objects located on the mantelpiece could be said to be central in reflecting a number of aspects of the lives of those who placed them there'. Ralph relates how he constructed his own art installation to explore the ways that visitors to an art gallery in Manchester interacted with these small things, and how individuals might 'curate' collections in ways that transform mass produced items into 'objects of memory'.

As an assemblage these articles exhibit a careful consideration and questioning of exactly how materials and people constitute social worlds and relationships which sustain identity and memory and, in turn, the social and political structures or norms that these attachments invest in, stabilise and maintain. While each analysis works to reveal the histories and structures that might be concealed behind uncritical acceptance of ideas of 'possession and belonging', they all reflect the enchantment, pleasure or more ambivalent emotions that these authors derive from their work with small and forgotten things.

#### ENDNOTES

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## An Auto-ethnography on digging and belonging STEVE BROWN

**Mrs L. Weidenhofer.  
Fairview Street. Arncliffe New South Wales.**

These words appear on a card I recovered on 24 August 2007. It was the day I took ownership of the property at 85 Fairview Street in the Sydney suburb of Arncliffe, Australia. Though I did not know it at the time, the hand-written, pencilled and inked words were inscribed in 1938 prior to Mrs Weidenhofer's death. The marked card (Figure 1), perhaps formerly accompanying flowers, was one of many objects recovered from the sealed fireplace in the house's front (bed)room. The cache of things, mixed amongst ash and charcoal, comprised three labelled pharmaceutical bottles – an antiseptic preparation for the treatment of whooping cough, Nyal corn remover and Marmola tablets for the treatment of obesity – a glass tube, an intact glass vase or ink pot, a fragment of a painted Chinese porcelain saucer, a glass doll's eye, a blackened ceramic marble, a disintegrated My Uncle Toby's Rolled Oats packet, a horse-race betting ticket and the card for Mrs Weidenhofer. As an archaeologist and new homeowner I was intrigued. Who was Mrs L. Weidenhofer? What gift accompanied the card? Why was the card entombed?



Figure 1 85 Fairview Street: 'Card left for Mrs L. Weidenhofer.' (Photograph Steve Brown, 2011)

I begin with the card encounter because this article is concerned with personal heritage and the role of material things in the construction of place-attachment.<sup>1</sup> My interest lies in interrogating my own sense of place-attachment (or belonging) to my home. I argue that personal experience can provide comparative information for investigating other peoples' experiences of their 'special places'. That is, by critically reflecting on my own connectivity to place I aim to gain a base-level of data that informs my understandings of other peoples' experiences of place; that is, the social values of heritage places and/or archaeological sites.<sup>2</sup> I argue that self-awareness and reflexivity are important tools in the work of archaeologists who seek to recognise and respect personal and communal place-attachments.

As an archaeologist – I am trained in the practice and theories of archaeology – and a community member – I share expertise in, and feelings for, my local environment alongside other residents – I am in an ideal position to apply critical self-reflective or auto-ethnographic methods. Auto-ethnography is a method that focuses on cultural analysis and interpretation. It uses the researcher's autobiographical data to investigate the practice of others and employs reflection to develop analytic insights.<sup>3</sup> The location where the application of auto-ethnography is most pertinent, and at which my double identity as archaeologist and community member coalesces, is my home. In this article I explore the phenomenon of identity from the perspective of the individual archaeologist as community member and memory elicited through experiences and provoked, invoked and creatively imagined through encounter and entanglement with the 'field site' – my home – and 'found objects' – that is, the 'card left for' Mrs Weidenhofer.

Thus my concern is not with memory and identity at the global, transnational or nation-state levels, but rather at the local scale of the single 'site' and 'small' landscape. My approach is personal and autobiographic, focussed on particular ways in which implicit and explicit memories that constitute human and object biographies become entangled and thereby construct knowledge of and elicit feelings for place. Because this piece is within a journal concerned with community, I begin with a discussion of the way in which I use the term.

#### COMMUNITIES AS MORE-THAN-HUMAN ASSEMBLAGES

'[T]he suburban block is replete with long evident family endeavour'.<sup>4</sup>

Community is a slippery though usefully ambiguous term. The Macquarie Dictionary defines it as 'a group of any size whose members reside in a specific locality, share government, and have a cultural and historic heritage'. Laurajane Smith and Emma Waterton observe that while communities may be defined by place, shared histories and ethnicity, they 'take many forms, are often riven by dissent, and bear the burden of uncomfortable histories'.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, communities need not reside in a bounded geographic locality – such as the archaeological community is dispersed

across the globe – share government – such as the European community of separate countries with individual governments – or have a common cultural heritage – like an on-line community. Thus no component of the Macquarie Dictionary definition is a necessary marker of a community. Additionally, communities need not be limited to the human estate. For example, ecological communities comprise interdependent collectives of plants and animals. In my view the latter includes humans, though this is not typically a view held by ecologists.<sup>6</sup>

For the purpose of this article, I also want to stretch the meaning of community to include, but not be restricted to, material things. For example, I view the assemblage of objects recovered from the sealed fireplace at my home as a community of things. For 69 years the assemblage inhabited the fireplace. The view of collections of material things or objects as a community draws on post-human scholarship, an area of academic enquiry that views humans as part of – rather than separate from – the natural world and makes calls for greater equity between humans, other species and things. This view also draws on work in anthropology that emphasises the biography or social life of things, tracing an object throughout its ‘lifecycle’ from production, through various contexts of use and social efficacy, in order to emphasise its power to shape human affairs.<sup>7</sup> Social anthropologist Tim Ingold has argued for non-human things as active and alive; and for imagining a ‘lifeworld’ as a meshwork of interwoven lines whereby the relation between people and material things is ‘a line along which materials flow, mix and mutate’.<sup>8</sup> Equally, in the field of material culture studies, political theorist Jane Bennett recognises things as vibrant and argues for ‘vibrant matter’ having a certain effectivity of its own.<sup>9</sup> Such thinking reveals how the material world has forms of power and agency that ‘allow us to focus upon the way in which people and things are mutually related’.<sup>10</sup>

By accepting ideas of ‘things as active’, I recognise communities of vibrant things as inseparable from the people who interact with them, whether in the past – such as the assemblage of objects concealed in the fireplace in 1938 – or the present – my ‘discovery’ of the cache in 2007. That is, objects emerge from encounters with people and people’s lives become entwined with objects. In anthropologist Daniel Miller’s words: ‘Things make us just as much as we make things.’<sup>11</sup> Here Miller is making the point that people and things co-produce or co-create one another and are interdependent. Thus, a collection of objects is necessarily entangled with those people who create, utilise and discard them: communities of things become indivisible from communities of people.<sup>12</sup>

It is with the notion of communities as more-than-human assemblages in mind that I turn to consider the themes of this section: archaeologies of memory and identity. My attention is on interplays of past or historical people, and present-day humans, with material things. My focus is on the perspective of the archaeologist: the person who investigates a place through historical documents, interviews, field survey, excavation and, centrally, the material traces of place. But I also analyse the notion that, while

archaeology has historically been about great discoveries, analytical techniques, accumulating knowledge and constructing interpretive frameworks, a less-considered aspect of archaeological practice is place-making and place-attachment. Archaeologist Sue Hamilton, for example, observes that archaeology, and excavation in particular, 'can engender a strong sense of, and reaction to, place'.<sup>13</sup>

#### HOME-PLACE AND MATERIAL MEMORY

I present two narratives that serve to introduce my people/thing-based experience of place-attachment.

A woman and two children have escaped unhurt after shots were fired at their home in Sydney's south overnight. A number of bullets pierced the Arncliffe house just before 10pm. Police spokeswoman Georgie Wells says forensic officers are examining the scene.<sup>14</sup>

My home lies within the suburb of Arncliffe, eleven kilometres south of Sydney's CBD. Fairview Street, Arncliffe, was created in 1905 when two six-acre estates, Fairview and Belmont, were subdivided. The semi-detached brick cottage at 85 Fairview Street was constructed by 1913. A Google search on 'Fairview Street Arncliffe', undertaken before I purchased and occupied number 85, located media reports describing how the house had been fired upon at 10:20pm on Friday 17 February 2006. Local papers headlined reports on the incident with 'Family's home peppered with bullets' and 'Shots fired into Sydney home'.<sup>15</sup> The most obvious evidence of this violent episode is a hole, 11 millimetres in diameter, piercing the glass-panel above the front door. Radiating out from the bullet trace, across the glass, is a series of small cracks. On the inside of the glass pane, covering the hole, is a small (five centimetre diameter) circular sticker (Figure 2). The translucent sticker incorporates the Arabic character for Allah. I surmise that the Muslim family living here at the time deliberately covered the bullet hole with the sticker in order to propagate future blessings and safety from gunmen. I have left the sticker, not just because it covers the bullet hole in the glass, but also because it is a material memory of a dramatic event.

Archaeology, according to archaeologist Laurent Olivier, is a discipline concerned with material memory.<sup>16</sup> Rather than a form of history that emphasises sequential and linear time, Olivier argues, archaeology is a form of memory: 'Archaeological memory is a material memory'.<sup>17</sup> The material memory is unconscious and it is the role of the archaeologist, like the psychoanalyst, to bring to light something not immediately evident. In this view the past is not temporally or physically remote but rather is here, now and everywhere. Olivier states: 'the place of the past is not the past itself, but rather the present'.<sup>18</sup> Thus, in Olivier's conception, the discipline of archaeology is concerned with studying the materiality of the present regardless of whether material things originate in the deep or contemporary past; that is, time as multi-temporal rather than linear.<sup>19</sup>

Olivier's reading of archaeology as practice in the present makes the discipline relevant to investigating contemporary identity and meaning. Returning to the bullet

hole and sticker, I am faced with a choice of retaining the material things as static – though affective – representations of past events or transforming them by superimposing new narratives upon them. In fact the sticker has become overlain, for me, with new, personal meanings, one of which is that the tulip-shaped Arabic character acts as a metonym for my 2010 travels in Turkey, and in particular visits to Istanbul's Aya Sofya where huge nineteenth-century wood medallions inscribed with gilt Arabic letters, including the character for Allah, hang high above the marble floor.<sup>20</sup> There is also an emotional dimension to this transformation – the bullet hole and sticker have become less a haunting reminder of danger and more a pleasurable memory of holiday travel. In other words, engagement with the material world is about transformational practice, an effect of which is to renovate place through personal experience and memory.

#### BRINGING OBJECTS OUT OF THE GUTTER

An archaeologist: a person who finds things, who resurrects objects from worlds that have disappeared and brings them back to the present, who goes forth with his eyes on the ground where the memory of eras gone by lies buried, who scans the surface of the earth, where time is recorded, in search of traces of the subtle workings of memory.<sup>21</sup>

My second narrative concerns a group of objects recovered in 2007 from the then leaf-filled gutter that extends along the front of the house. The assemblage comprises a 2005 twenty-cent piece (the coin commemorates 'Coming home' – 60 years since the end of the Second World War), a set of grey plastic handcuffs with 'POLICE' embossed on each cuff and three toy sports cars. I find this assemblage tremendously evocative. I imagine the fun and frivolity of children at play, away from the gaze of parents, as they challenge each other to lob ever-more toys into the gutter.<sup>22</sup> However, the two Fairview Street boys were not just any children, but rather the two shy boys who had huddled beside their mother on a lounge room sofa when, in June 2007, I inspected the house.

The gutter finds point to a boisterous and slightly naughty side to these children's behaviour and personalities. The toys mark a sense of performing boyhoods in which miniature fast cars, money and the long arm of the law appear as an innocent portrayal of adulthood, yet take place in the context of a house into which bullets were fired some eighteen months previously. Whatever the reality of the boys' lives and the story of the bullet hole, my material engagement with the toys and pierced glass panel draw out feelings and emotions that creatively, empathically and imaginatively connect me with place, and temporally with my own childhood. I envision and sense, but can never know, the lived-in, recent past.

In addition to the objects found in the house and gutter, I have encountered, through gardening, a vast amount of stuff, a world of things, at the Fairview Street property.<sup>23</sup> Fragments of glass, ceramic, metal, bone and plastics are common and occasionally I have encountered intact small bottles, marbles, beads, coins, buttons,



animal teeth and plastic toy soldiers. Evidence of rubbish pits and lenses of discarded fireplace ash are occasionally unearthed whilst creating garden beds. I have encountered 'rare' finds: for example, an AirUK teaspoon, a hand-painted gnome, a nineteenth-century clay pipe bowl and an Edward VII commemorative medallion. In singling out and privileging rare and exotic objects, I am participating in a practice that harks back to seventeenth-century European antiquarian traditions of assembling curiosities,<sup>24</sup> a practice that in itself enables me to empathise with visitors to archaeological digs who might desire material evidence, a souvenir, of their visit.

Between March 2010 and January 2011, I undertook six test-pit excavations across the Fairview Street property.<sup>25</sup> The excavations were provoked by the seemingly endless quantity of stuff recovered from establishing a garden. From an area of 5m<sup>2</sup>, 3600 things were recovered and catalogued (Table 1), suggesting the presence of a total assemblage of 250,000 things buried across the 347m<sup>2</sup> suburban block. The massive quantity of material things points to all kinds of activities: evidence of the presence of children, women and men through things that have decayed, been abandoned and discarded or lost.

So what might the bullet hole, sticker and gutter assemblage – material traces that I have selected from amongst a huge array of found and excavated stuff – say about identity and memory and co-constituted communities of things and people?

#### NARRATIVE, IDENTITY AND MEMORY

My identity is entangled and interconnected with my home, and the memory-making that plays out within it. My home also happens to be an archaeological field site, where my life-history, other people's life-stories and vast numbers of object biographies intersect and become inextricably entangled. The archaeological deposits, the house fabric, the garden plantings – my body itself – are thick with embedded memory traces.

When reflecting on the feelings of living within this labyrinth of memory traces, I am reminded of a time when I went snorkelling whilst on a holiday in Bali. The dive site was an unbelievably beautiful location – when viewed from a distance. It was a bay of turquoise water with white-sand beaches fringed by forests of coconut palms. This idyllic tropical setting, however, was one where trails of refuse floated and sometimes sank into the waters of the bay. Every conceivable variety of plastic thing had been sucked out from a narrow creek mouth into the bay by a receding tide. Snorkelling through this viscous miasma of refuse and decay was unpleasant. Toothpaste containers and plastic shopping bags, as well as condoms and other nasties, occasionally brushed against my skin eliciting disgust at the rubbish and setting off my shark phobic angst.

My home of material vestiges and memory traces is generally not angst-ridden, like the snorkelling expedition, but still I am surrounded, enveloped and entangled within a world of material memories. Material things constantly brush against me, alert me to previous encounters, create new forms of engagement or simply become an everyday,



barely noticeable, intra-action. In this regard I am drawn to the idea of material agency,<sup>26</sup> a phenomenon that recognises the active participation of non-human forces in events: in Jane Bennett's terms, a 'vital materiality' that situates things as 'lively', 'the capacity of things...to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, properties, or tendencies of their own'.<sup>27</sup>

Thus the bullet hole in the glass panel above the front door mostly goes unnoticed, outside of conscious awareness, on my many-daily trips along the entry hall toward the front door. Sometimes, however, I mindfully glance up at the sticker and bullet hole, where memories of shooter and holidays come to the fore, re-experienced in bodily and affective ways and with varying intensity. The presence of the bullet trace and the violence it projects is particularly powerful when other drive-by shootings at private residences are reported in the media.<sup>28</sup>

In memory research the neurobiological explanation for the effect of an initial experience on the brain is termed an engram.<sup>29</sup> Thus in my initial entanglements with the bullet hole and sticker, my engram included various levels of experience: semantic or factual – my knowledge of the origin of the bullet hole; autobiographical – my sense of self at the time I recognised the trace to be a bullet hole); somatic – what my body felt like; perceptual – what the bullet hole looked and felt like; emotional – my mood at the time; and behavioural – what I did with my body. My original bullet hole engram includes linkages connecting each of these forms of representation. My subsequent encounters with the bullet hole draw on, but never fully replicate, these various initial experiential levels because explicit memory is cumulative rather than repetitive.<sup>30</sup>

Thus when I said that material things constantly 'brush' against me in my home, I mean there is a complex interplay occurring between different experiential levels of remembering in addition to the liveliness, or vital materiality, of the things, the bullet hole and sticker, themselves. I choose to conceptualise such encounters within a paradigm of co-production and co-enactment that focuses on entanglement: that is, entanglement across assemblages of people-places-things rather than interactions of pre-existing, separate entities.<sup>31</sup> An explanatory framework of entanglement between humans, non-humans and materials is as much applicable to the bullet hole and the gutter assemblage as it is to other forms of archaeological assemblages.<sup>32</sup>

Much of my personal identity is entangled with the abstract notion of home, a complex construction of spatially situated materials and memories. For me, home as abstract entity is constructed and performed through innumerable individual experiences and events that are tied to place and to physical fabric, found objects and material traces. The narratives of the bullet hole and gutter assemblage are nested within larger stories – for example, the story of the residency of the family who occupied 85 Fairview Street before I purchased and moved into the place. My home-place is infused and enlivened with material traces, with communities of things.

This point is evidenced in a family archaeology project undertaken by Jonna Ulin, who describes her excavation and memory-work at 'Per Johan's place', her grandmother's house in Sweden.<sup>33</sup> Ulin's auto-ethnographic account – which Ulin calls 'exploring the walkscape of my biographical past' – draws from excavated materials, childhood recollections and family stories, secrets and photographs.<sup>34</sup> This mixed data assemblage is a reminder that all people, places and things have material, storied and familial pasts. Thus when archaeologists investigate and excavate houses, even when not their own, they are entering spaces filled and alive with memories. The memories are, firstly, materially enfolded into the ruins and sediments themselves and, secondly, held by present-day people who know the place in its current landscape setting. The archaeologist, against the personal backdrop of his/her own experience of house as home, typically investigates in situ material memories and listens to local community stories. Hence my argument at the start of this article that self-awareness and reflexivity are important tools in the work of archaeologists who seek to recognise and respect other people's and communities' knowledge, experience and place-attachments.

#### CONCLUSION: ENVISIONING COMMUNITY MEMBERS AS ARCHAEOLOGISTS?

What are the implications of this personalised account of home, identity and memory for the work of archaeology and heritage practice more generally? The major point I make harks back to the seminal edited volume *Writing Culture* by James Clifford and George Marcus.<sup>35</sup> In essence the collective message of that book's authors focuses on the authority of the ethnographic text. The authors question established modes of ethnographic writing that embody a single authorial voice and thereby, they argue, privilege the ethnographer as expert. The alternative is a dialectical and dialogical ethnography that incorporates, even privileges, multiple meanings of place as expressed by other, non-archaeologist, communities and individuals. Yannis Hamilakis terms such an approach archaeological ethnography, which includes a concern for investigating the social and public contexts of archaeology and the ways archaeological knowledge is constructed.<sup>36</sup>

My point is that an archaeologist who undertakes research via field studies for the purpose of knowledge-making is at one and the same time an observer and a participant. As Sue Hamilton notes, for archaeologists, fieldwork engenders a strong sense of, and reaction to, place. The bodily experience of landscape, the affective entanglements with sediments and artefacts, the complex memory engrams associated with uncovering things and features and the ways in which objects are invested with mnemonic significance must necessarily inform the ways in which meaning is attributed to, in Olivier's words, 'studying the materiality of the present'. The identities and memories, spatialised within the context of the field site, will always remain an implicit part of archaeological field experience and therefore should necessarily, in my view, be made explicit in the construction of place narratives. Auto-ethnography that

critically reflects upon the entangled memories of place and archaeological objects is a valuable methodology and practice in this regard.

Framed in a different way, I suggest that archaeologists occupy a powerful and privileged position: they exercise enormous control over memory and identity through ways in which stories of the past are told. We construct archives of the past, that is, what is retained, how it is sorted and catalogued, and the narratives constructed about specific objects, places, people and events. As historians Joan Schwartz and Terry Cook remind us, archivists – and here I include archaeologists, historians and heritage practitioners – have a powerful mediating role in shaping recorded memory by determining what is preserved and made accessible.<sup>37</sup> In this way, place, identity and memory are dynamic and there is rarely ever one narrative, even with regard to bullet holes and assemblages of children's toys.

Through my personal, auto-ethnographic investigation of home-place attachment I have learned that community member and archaeologist are difficult-to-separate identities. My local community arises from my entanglements with friends, neighbours, previous (historicised) residents – such as Mrs Weidenhofer – and vibrant objects, including a card, bullet trace, sticker and childhood toys. I have found comfort in resisting the objectivity associated with the expertise of the archaeologist and heritage practitioner and found great pleasure and reward in sensuous engagement with the genealogies, social lives and material memories of things. I have learnt that when I enter new landscapes to perform archaeological or heritage tasks, I am necessarily choosing to become part of, rather than consult or objectively study, local communities of people and things.

Michael Shanks observes that 'we are all archaeologists now'. What Shanks' notion points to is that all people engage with places in archaeological ways when they encounter things and creatively think about them.<sup>38</sup> If we are all archaeologists in our various ways, then the idea that archaeologists and community members are necessarily separate identities is dissolved to a considerable degree. That all community members are archaeologists and all archaeologists are members of communities is a concept I find useful in my work in archaeological and heritage practice.

#### POSTSCRIPT: MRS WEIDENHOFER AND ME

Having introduced Mrs L. Weidenhofer via an entombed card at the start of this paper, I feel it incumbent upon me to share something of my knowledge of her. In so doing I will briefly respond to the questions: Who was Mrs L. Weidenhofer? What gift accompanied the card? Why was the card entombed?

Some facts. Mrs L. Weidenhofer is Winifred Nina Flood. Winifred was born on 22 December 1886 at Narrandera, a small country town on the Murrumbidgee River in southern New South Wales, Australia. In 1908, at age 22, Winifred married Laurence Miller Weidenhofer (b1883) and together they had four children. In 1920, the family moved into 85 Fairview Street, Arncliffe. In the Australian Electoral Rolls of the 1930s,

Winifred's occupation is listed as 'home duties' and Laurence's as 'carpenter'. They remained as tenants at the cottage until Winifred's death at age 52 in July 1938.

Some speculation. Perhaps Winifred succumbed to whooping cough as evidenced by the 'eucresol inhalant' medicine bottle recovered from the bedroom fireplace. Perhaps the pencilled and inked 'card left for Mrs L. Weidenhofer' accompanied flowers that shared the final days of her life. Perhaps she died in my bedroom. The landlord of the Fairview Street property at the time of Winifred's death was Clarence Roy Tasker, a market gardener. He likely blocked-in the front room fireplace prior to re-letting the property: Laurence had moved out soon after Winifred's passing. In the process, Winifred's card and the final discarded traces of family life, death and grief were gathered and deposited into the hearth space. Perhaps this was a deliberate act of cleansing the space. Some feelings. The card, recovered 69 years after Winifred had died and Clarence Tasker had sealed it in a disused fireplace, is an object that has great power, a potent object. The card was one of the first objects I encountered in the house. It drew me into the object world of my home and called on me to speculate on its social life, investigate its factual history and create a fragmentary narrative. The card alerted me to the history of my home and the card and I became entangled in my home-making enterprise. The card and its associated assemblage, Winifred and her family and me are, to my mind, a community of entangled things. Happily entangled things.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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21 Olivier, *op cit*, p3.

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## Wagon Roads, Identity and the Decolonization of a First Nations Landscape

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Roads embody the experiences of those who construct, use and maintain them through time. This paper explores the social life of a wagon road located in southwestern British Columbia, Canada. Situated between Port Douglas to the south and the Lillooet Lake in the north (Figure 1), this road is best known for its role as a route to the Fraser River Gold Rush in the mid-nineteenth century. I illustrate here that its significance transcends this colonial past. This article explores the roads entanglement in the lives of two contemporary groups: the indigenous Stl'atl'imx (pronounced Stat-lee-um) of the lower Lillooet River Valley whose traditional territories are bisected by the road; and a group of non-First Nations (indigenous) Grade 10 high school students from the Langley School District who hike the road as part of their history and geography curriculum. While these two groups differ in their relationship with the road both find meanings through their entanglement with it.

My approach to this wagon road is based on my understanding that roads are material culture or 'things' that both produce, and are products of, complex relationships with the human, non-human and natural world. While roads are shaped through human intentions that inscribe meaning into their design, these same roads influence how humans engage with them – they may cause one to slip, change route or rebuild their surface.<sup>1</sup> In applying a symmetrical approach to the wagon road I highlight its agency and ability to become enmeshed in social relationships in complex ways.<sup>2</sup>

Before delving into the theoretical foundations for this article it is important to provide some cultural background to the Stl'atl'imx of the lower Lillooet River Valley. The Stl'atl'imx are an Interior Salish people who divide themselves into those of the 'upper territory' – including the areas around Lillooet – and the 'lower territory' or the lower Lillooet River Valley, the people whose territory ranges from the Harrison Lake in the south to Lillooet Lake in the north. This article focuses on the Stl'atl'imx of the lower Lillooet River Valley who speak the Ucwalmícwts ('oo-Kwale-MEWK) language. They are organised into the Xa'xtsa (pronounced HAHK-cha), Skatin and the Samahquam Nations. In 1993 the political entity of In-SHUCK-ch Nation was created to represent the Stl'atl'imx of the lower Lillooet River Valley in the land claims process with the Government of Canada and province of British Columbia.

Through engaging with the road – building, using and maintaining it – the students and Stl'atl'imx initiated a dialogue among human, non-human and the natural world.<sup>3</sup> It is through this dialogue that the wagon road and those who engaged with it were co-created: they are interdependent and entangled. As Latour states, 'things do

not exist without being full of people'.<sup>4</sup> In many ways, then, this article is an exploration of heritage – how it is created and embedded through human interaction with the material, non-human and natural world and how it changes through time. While not framed as a discussion of heritage, this article lays the foundations for understanding heritage as both experience and process.<sup>5</sup>

The Harrison-Lillooet wagon road was built by the Royal Engineers in 1859 to provide miners and merchants with a less dangerous route to travel to the Fraser Canyon, the location of the Fraser River Gold Rush.<sup>6</sup> It replaced a pack trail built in 1858 that is believed to have followed the route of a pre-existing First Nations (indigenous) trail. Mile zero of the Harrison-Lillooet route was Port Douglas, named for the Governor of the Crown Colony of Vancouver Island, James Douglas, located on the northern end of Harrison Lake. While the Harrison-Lillooet road fell out of use for transporting supplies to the goldfields in 1865 after a new Fraser Canyon route was opened, the Stl'atl'imx of the lower Lillooet River Valley continued to travel and maintain this road.

In the early 1900s barges regularly transported equipment, groceries and mail to Port Douglas to supply the growing number of logging camps in the area.<sup>7</sup> Many of the Stl'atl'imx living along the Lillooet River travelled the wagon road – once every two weeks – to Port Douglas from their reserves to the north to obtain their groceries, mail and visit relatives living in the town. The wagon road was replaced as a communication route in 1953 when a new Forestry Service Road was opened.

#### REMEMBERING THE WAGON ROAD

It became evident early on in my research that the wagon road held a place of great significance to the Stl'atl'imx of the lower Lillooet River Valley. I naively arrived to their traditional territories prepared to survey the 1850s 'Gold Rush Road' and discuss its role as a colonising feature in their physical and social landscape. Known mainly for its Gold Rush past, I was under the false assumption that this road would be viewed by the Stl'atl'imx people as colonising, associated with the dispossession of their land and subjugation of their people. Instead, the wagon road was regarded with pride, associated with ancestors, community and tradition (Figure 2). The six years that the road was used as a route to the gold fields meant little in comparison to its role in their daily lives and those of their ancestors in the intervening 150 years. It was the embodied routine (*habitus*) of using and maintaining the wagon road that created and reaffirmed its place in memory and in their social lives.<sup>8</sup>

The term 'social memory' highlights how memory is transmitted through individuals as members of larger social groups.<sup>9</sup> Thus there was no one collective memory of the road but instead individual experiences and memories were transformed – made social – through the act of sharing. This dialogic process of experiencing, remembering and sharing was the 'work' of memory that was entangled in the materiality and agency of the road. This process that is embedded in and played

out through the road established and continues to assert the roads place in local community and belonging.<sup>10</sup>

The entwined nature of the road, the Stl'atl'imx of the lower Lillooet River Valley and non-human world is illustrated in the accounts of Elders who travelled it. As noted above, for the Stl'atl'imx, travelling the wagon road was as much about community and solidarity as it was about the physical journey from 'Point A to Point B'. Their accounts, like that of Elder Lyle Peters, include practical travel details (road conditions, rest stops and difficult hills) alongside social aspects of life (family picnics, fearful places and working together):

It was a very bumpy road; very big boulders sticking out here and there you know... you could see all the campsites, the old fire places depended on how many families you were travelling with. For that long distance my dad and his brothers, we would sort of all travel together you know... And another thing that was so good about that, there was even a 'get together' for families, mingling, storytelling, lots of storytelling, lots of teasing, always lots of teasing.<sup>11</sup>

The life of the wagon road and the Stl'atl'imx of the lower Lillooet River Valley were interwoven and shaped through this entanglement. Weather, vegetation, the slope of the land, the bears, bedrock and wagon wheels were equal players in this messy dialogue. This interdependence among the human, non-human and natural world means that a slight shift in one prompts action in the others. As Hodder states, the 'dependence of things on humans means that humans are always busy along the strings or cables of entanglement fixing things, putting fingers in dykes, fixing holes in buckets, and so on'.<sup>12</sup> As mentioned previously, it was this embodied routine of using, maintaining and rebuilding portions of this road for over 150 years that created and reaffirmed the road's position of significance in memory and as part of their social lives.<sup>13</sup>

The wagon road shaped those who interacted with it. This transformative nature is evident in oral accounts from Elders who clearly remember those parts of the road that were dangerous, steep or required much labour. As Mills and Walker state, '[p]eople construct social memories through their engagement with other people (living as well as ancestral) and through their interaction with varieties of material culture'.<sup>14</sup> For Elder Laura Purcell travel up the steep section of the wagon road called 'Crying Feet' or *ilala7cn* (pronounced *Ilala-HOON*) created a strong memory that still influences her relationship with landscapes today:

I remember that road because we always had to get off the wagon because the horses had to make it up there, the team you know. And we would have to walk all the way up that road when I was little... I remember every time I see a cliff with a lot of moss on it, it reminds me of one of the places I would get scared when I was little on the wagons – you go along a cliff there with all the green moss, so every time I see something like that I get a flashback.<sup>15</sup>



While it is vital to acknowledge the impact of interaction among the human, non-human and natural world, and the agency of 'things' in this dialogue, the social relationships negotiated among humans through such interaction is equally transformative. Working together on repairs to the wagon road created and reaffirmed identity as the comments from Elders Frank and Ina Charlie suggest,

It would wash out. They would fix it... tell somebody and they would tell everybody then they all'd go help. They'd help everybody, not like now, eh. You'd get stuck them days, if someone got hungry they'd all get together and bring food to people, if they were hungry.<sup>16</sup>

Even though the wagon road is no longer used by Frank and Ina Charlie, Lyle Peters, Laura Purcell or the other Elders I interviewed, their lives are still entangled with the road through their acts of 'memory work'.<sup>17</sup> Memories of the road are recalled, reshaped, forgotten, reinvented and transmitted.<sup>18</sup> This active process of remembering the road is inseparable from its materiality. Witmore discusses the polychromic nature of landscape, where 'pasts are thoroughly blended into the present; that pasts push back and have an impact within contemporary relations in a multiplicity of ways'.<sup>19</sup> The material remains of the road are intimately connected to those who used the road in the recent and distant past. As long as the memory and materiality of the road exists it will continue to engage in their lives.<sup>20</sup>

Ten years ago the wagon road was cleared of debris and made accessible for foot traffic as part of larger plans to open the road for tourism. Those who participated in this maintenance spoke of the work with pride; they felt good about caring for the road because it was used by their ancestors.<sup>21</sup> This connection with the road transcends the recent past – through tending the road they are caring for their ancestors. The material culture of the road is inseparable from those who use it, their actions and interactions. It is this embedded and timeless relationship with the material remains of the road that has prompted its inclusion in the In-SHUCK-ch Treaty Settlement Lands with the Provincial and Federal Government.

This wagon road has multiple lives – each emerging through interaction with those who use, build and maintain it. Thus while the footsteps of engineers, gold miners, Stl'atl'imx and students may overlap, they do not share the same road. In the section that follows I discuss how students and their teachers engage with the wagon road and landscape of the Stl'atl'imx of the lower Lillooet River Valley on their annual 'Harrison Hike'. While the experiences of these students are not comparable to those of the Stl'atl'imx whose lives were linked to the road and landscape through daily practice, this example illustrates the complex and entangled nature of materiality, memory, identity and landscape. Even this short-term engagement with the road – walking, repairing, clearing – interacting with fellow students, the non-human and natural world – animals, underbrush, weather – altered how these students see themselves, their place in the world and their future.

THE ANNUAL 'HARRISON HIKE'

Unlike the Stl'atl'imx who traversed the wagon road as part of their daily lives, the 'Harrison Hike' is an organised, supervised educational excursion that includes walking the wagon road, learning outdoor survival skills, and the history of British Columbia. Teacher and hike leader Grant Inkster describes:

The students must sleep under tarps, prepare meals on an open fire, camp in wilderness locations, gather drinking water, construct latrines, tear down – hike – and set up a new camp each day. In addition, we have activities planned for each day... the students acquire a wide variety of camping skills, learn about B.C. history, experience a semi-wilderness location of our province and learn to appreciate the value of working together as a group to accomplish the many tasks required to successfully survive each day.<sup>22</sup>

The first 'Harrison Hike' was organised in 1976 under the leadership of teacher Charles Hou who designed it as part of the Grade 10 social studies curriculum. Today 75 students from Walnut Grove Secondary School in Langley, around 200km southwest of the traditional territories of the Stl'atl'imx people, take part in this annual six day hike. The significance of this hike is best illustrated by George Kozlovic who participated on the Harrison Hike in 1987 as a Grade 10 student. Once he finished teacher training at university he ran the hike with Charles Hou. Kozlovic is now principal of Walnut Grove Secondary School, and he still participates in the hike whenever he can: 'while I am no longer actively running the Hike and have only been on the Hike once in the past 9 years, it is still very important to me and a huge part of my life... Two years ago I went on the hike along with my oldest daughter and am hoping to also bring my other two children on the hike in future years'.

Students and teachers become part of a larger dialogue among the human, non-human and natural world through the 'Harrison Hike'. With few outdoor skills these students must adjust to the ever-changing natural and material world while they shift in how they perceive and come to understand this new landscape. The slope of the road, rain, mud, mosquitos, campfire smoke, footbridges and fellow travellers are all entangled and interwoven into their individual experience of the road. This bodily engagement and social interaction transforms how these students see themselves and the world around them. The transformative effect of the 'Harrison Hike' is illustrated when Grant Inkster was asked if he saw students change throughout the hike:

Change would be an understatement. Evolving or morphing into a cohesive family unit would be more appropriate. They start off as a group of independent 2014 teenagers with very little in common. They are stripped of their normal routine and presented with a series of challenges that require them to work together to accomplish. They often struggle, work hard, laugh, cry, celebrate, show compassion and develop camaraderie. They forge bonds and friendships that last through Grade 12 and beyond.<sup>23</sup>

While the 'Harrison Hike' involves many different activities where students engage with their surroundings and each other, walking the wagon road – sharing step falls

and pace – is as much social as physical. Sharing the rhythm of walking is an intimate encounter that can create bonds among those involved.<sup>24</sup> It is through the embodied experience of walking that both student identity and physical landscape were shaped; as Lund states, walking is as much about ‘exploring oneself as exploring the surroundings’.<sup>25</sup>

Humans never just walk. Walking is only one part of a much larger, complex engagement that includes the natural and material world. Walking the wagon road requires a deep awareness of the dialogue that exists amongst human, non-human and the natural world and an ability to adjust to their ever shifting actions. Do I move fallen tree branches to the side of the trail for those who pass after me? Is the bridge washed out? Did I bring the correct supplies with me to ford it? Am I going the right direction? Am I making enough noise to scare away the bears? While walking may be a dialogue initiated between the walker and the ground as Vergunst discusses, the material culture of the road – its slope and structure – is inseparable from this embodied experience of walking.<sup>26</sup> As Lee and Ingold state, walking is an experience ‘in which environment shifts and imprints on the body, and is at the same time affected by it’.<sup>27</sup> Each interaction alters future interactions as the road holds a unique position as both ‘agent’ that directs human action and ‘patient’ or product of human action.<sup>28</sup> The wagon road is never the same twice. It is through such entanglement that the wagon road lives out its alternative lives.

The ‘Harrison Hike’ influences how students come to understand their place in this ‘foreign’ landscape and their own social worlds. It is a journey made up of ‘chains of practices through which humans and non-humans are connected over time in materially substantial ways’.<sup>29</sup> The hike successfully engages students in the process of co-mingling. Human and ‘thing’ are blended, shaped, created and reformed throughout it. I emphasize below how the ritual practice of hiking to ‘Moody’s Lookout’ encapsulates this process while illustrating the inseparable link among identity, bodily engagement, materiality and memory.

#### MOODY’S LOOKOUT

On day five of the Harrison Hike students climb a mountain to a place called ‘Moody’s Lookout’ (Figure 3). It is named after Colonel Richard Moody of the Royal Engineers who surveyed the wagon road from this mountain. Charles Hou describes the origins of this tradition in an interview taken at the top of Moody’s Lookout:

When Colonel Moody was building the road he came up here to survey up and down the valley because you can see a long way in both directions. And the earliest map I found of this area showed Moody’s Lookout on the map so when we got here we decided we needed to hike it. And every year it became a tradition to hike this... on a day when no one really wanted to. Because sometimes it was very hot or else we had been hiking all day but we did it the first year so everybody else had to do it and over the years the tradition developed that we would carry a stone from the bottom to the top of the hill... I have taken over 2000 students up here and there must be another

1000 from other schools that have been up here now and so the students bring their rock and put it here.

And what I used to tell the students to encourage them, because they didn't want to hike this hill, was that if they carry the rock to the top of the hill and put it here that they could do anything they wanted in life because they would know that it was here and they knew that they did something that they didn't really want to do. Now the latest thing is that people are bringing felt pens and they are writing on the rocks so people know...Just about every student who has hiked the Harrison Hike has been up here since 1976. So that's our secret vocabulary. Use 'Moody's Lookout' and no one in the world knows where it is except kids who have been up here.<sup>30</sup>

Students became entangled with the non-human world through climbing to 'Moody's Lookout'. This relationship was mutually transformative: each student enters into a personal relationship with Moody's Lookout, and emerges – changed – from it.<sup>31</sup> Material culture was entangled in this process. As a communal, ritualised and historical practice, the choice of which stone to carry had implications that transcended current social relationships to those in the past and future. The rock – its weight, size – influenced how students climbed the hill and brought meaning to that practice. The rock made a difference – student and the 'thingly qualities' of the rock were entangled and redefined through the climb.

Once at the top of the hill students inscribed their rocks. While they all may have participated in this activity they varied in how they chose to memorialise it. Some wrote their full name and date with a brief mention of the experience like 'James Lam T.M. H.H 2012 good times' while others just included a first name 'Emilio', still others left uplifting sentiments such as 'The sun is just one cloud away' and others left messages to loved ones, 'To Jack with love'. While it is impossible to know for sure, the varied inscriptions suggest that not all hikers engaged with their rock or the practice of hiking to Moody's Lookout in the same way. Some chose to commemorate their personal presence and participation while others left messages for those who may hike the hill in the future.

There is a pilgrimage-like quality to the experience of climbing this hill which differs from those experiences recounted by the Stl'atl'imx. While each student experienced the climb differently, the collective practice created a sense of community that transcended the individual student experience. Through following the path and carrying the rock students become connected to those who completed the journey before, as George Kozlovic states:

When many get to the top and see how high they have climbed, they cannot believe what they have just done and feel an enormous sense of accomplishment and pride. And when they see the large pile of rocks at the top that students before them have brought there, they feel like they are part of something bigger... like it is a tradition of great significance and importance. Many have had older brothers and sisters do the hike so they know the importance of this ritual.<sup>32</sup>

Once at the top of the mountain rocks are inscribed and added to the ever-changing pile of stones. It is through the intentioned acts of students and teachers that this rock pile becomes a cairn. Applying the concept of citation provides a useful means through which to understand the entanglement of place (cairn) and practice (hike) in social memory.<sup>33</sup> By walking the hill and contributing their stones to the cairn individuals voluntarily connect themselves to those who participated in the hike before and those who will participate in the future. There is a timeless quality to this practice. The genealogy or multiple histories of the hike are inseparable from the bodily experience of hiking and the material manifestation of this practice – the path and cairn. Climbing Moody's Lookout and adding personalised rocks to the cairn reaffirms the important place of the Harrison Hike in both social memory and the physical landscape.

Ashmore fruitfully discusses the multiple and overlapping biographies of place at the Maya site of Quiriguá Guatemala thus providing insight into the shifting meanings and multivocality of places.<sup>34</sup> As she discusses, some meanings may be intentionally created as individuals build, use and maintain places while others accumulate meaning from events and experiences that occur in that place.<sup>35</sup> The hike to Moody's Lookout – the pathway and cairn that marks the top – is such a place of accumulated histories. The students create and embed meanings as they inscribe their stones and place them on the cairn while others are created through the act of hiking, standing at the top of the mountain and sharing their experiences with fellow travellers.

This cairn, like the wagon road, has multiple lives – it is the materialization of the repeated practice of hiking Moody's Lookout while at the same time writings on its individual rocks suggest that it is commemorative of the 'Harrison Hike' in general.<sup>36</sup> While the rocks will remain to remind future students of their significance, their individual messages will fade with time. The rock cairn is what Argounova-Low would call a memory link.<sup>37</sup> Embedded in the cairn are the timeless relationships with the human and non-human world that were entwined and played out throughout the 'Harrison Hike'. Climbing Moody's Lookout encapsulates the meaning of the 'Harrison Hike' to students and teachers alike – while individuals are transformed through the hike it is the collective experience that is remembered most clearly.

So far I have described two very different, though equally significant, accounts where human lives are entangled with the wagon road and its landscape. In a biographical sense these are but two of the many 'lives' of the wagon road.<sup>38</sup> While these experiences varied in their intensity and materiality they are similar in their transformative nature. For both, the wagon road is catalyst for identity, feelings of belonging and understanding of one's place in the world. While the Stl'atl'imx of the lower Lillooet River Valley, and the Grade 10 students and teachers like Charles Hou, Grant Inkster and George Kozlovic may see the road as holding a place of significance in their lives, one must ask what this 'significance' really means.

THE HERITAGE OF THE 'HERITAGE TRAIL'



When Charles Hou and his students arrived to Port Douglas to begin the hike in 1989 they found that the last remains of the Gold Rush past at that site had been bulldozed by a mining company. To protect the wagon road and its associated Gold Rush sites from future harm Hou and his students petitioned the provincial government and rallied public support to have the wagon road given official 'Heritage Trail' status. Consequently, the wagon road was awarded this status – the third such trail in the province of British Columbia to be given this designation – in 1991. As a 'Heritage Trail' the wagon road was protected under the conditions of the Heritage Conservation Act, management was transferred to the provincial government, and permits became necessary for any forestry practices or development 100 metres to either side of the road.

Even though the wagon road bisects their traditional territory, the Stl'atl'imx of the lower Lillooet River Valley were never consulted by teachers, students or the provincial government about plans for its preservation. While many would have supported preserving the wagon road, this reclassification was a colonial act that prioritised a state-sanctioned concept of heritage over that of the Stl'atl'imx who, for the preceding century had been the de facto users and caretakers of the road.<sup>39</sup> However, according to the province of British Columbia a Heritage Trail is one of 'historical significance' – in this case it was the Gold Rush or colonial past that made the wagon road 'legitimate' or worthy of management and conservation.<sup>40</sup>

While the road was preserved for its past life as a route to the Fraser River Gold Rush, its significance transcends this past. Its heritage value emerges through the relationships in which it is entwined in the 'here and now'. As Harrison states, 'heritage is primarily not about the past, but instead about our relationships with the present and the future'.<sup>41</sup> Heritage as discussed here is a process that changes through time, not a static outcome.<sup>42</sup> The Harrison Hike where students engaged in relationships with fellow humans, the environment, animal and non-human 'things', is the embodiment and expression of such a concept of heritage where meanings and values are passed on, reaffirmed and created anew.<sup>43</sup> The ritualised practice of hiking to Moody's Lookout is a valuable example of how heritage is created through the active choice of objects, places and practices that are viewed as significant to the present and to the future.<sup>44</sup> Thus while students and teachers pushed for the preservation of the road because of its historic past, it was their present-day interactions that gave the Harrison Hike its meaning and value.

The importance of the wagon road to the Stl'atl'imx of the lower Lillooet River Valley goes beyond official definitions of what 'heritage' is or is not. The wagon road holds an important place in their social landscape linking people from the past and present together.<sup>45</sup> Here heritage and memory are tightly linked. Remembering and sharing stories of building, using and tending the wagon road is part of making, conserving and nurturing heritage.<sup>46</sup> It is through the active process of remembering that the meaning and significance of the wagon road is negotiated.<sup>47</sup> While students

may walk the road and transform themselves through this practice, the Stl'atl'imx of the lower Lillooet River Valley are part of the road itself. Their stories tell of how their lives are entwined and entangled in the road – as they are with other parts of their landscape, its human and material aspects – in a way that cannot be detached from who they are. While they may leave their traditional territories, they take the road with them.

#### CONCLUSION: PART OF OUR HISTORY AND OUR FUTURE

The wagon road is both a physical and cultural anchor in the landscape of the Stl'atl'imx of the lower Lillooet River Valley. It is for this reason that it is part of the In-SHUCK-ch treaty with the Provincial and Federal Government. The mid to northern section of this road is included in the 'Treaty Settlement Lands' and its management is part of their 'Final Agreement' with the Governments of British Columbia and Canada. As part of this agreement they must define their heritage, and then adopt a plan to manage it. In an article from the local Úcwalmícw Newsletter David Carson states 'In-SHUCK-ch has been working... to preserve this important element of our history and to ensure that the trail contributes in a good way to our future'.<sup>48</sup>



Fig 4 Information board at Qwoqwaól'sa (Port Douglas) with cairn commemorating the Gold Rush in background (Photograph the author)

Information boards such as the one shown below at Qwoqwaól'sa (pronounced koh-Kwal-sah) or Port Douglas (Figure 4), tells the history of the First Nations village and people who lived in this area before colonial contact. Similar signs have been erected along significant parts of the wagon road to highlight the Ucwalmícwts (pronounced In-SHUCK-ch) culture and history. This new information kiosk commemorates a different past to what is written on the overgrown cairn located to its left which reads:

## PORT DOUGLAS

In 1958, the start of the gold rush, the Cariboo Trail ran from here to Lillooet on the bank of the Fraser River. This gold rush town was the jumping off place for thousands until 1863–65 when the Fraser Canyon Road turned traffic through Yale.

Gaining control of the wagon road is part of reclaiming their traditional territory, reconnecting with their ancestors and thus identities born of that land. Laurajane Smith discusses this link among heritage and place; heritage is more than the creation of identity, it is about 'helping us position ourselves as a nation, community or individual and our 'place' in our cultural, social and physical worlds'.<sup>49</sup> Through reclaiming their heritage trail the Stl'atl'imx of the lower Lillooet River Valley are decolonizing their landscape and regaining a sense of identity and belonging.<sup>50</sup>

In many ways this article is an exploration of heritage – how people from different social landscapes were transformed through initiating a dialogue with a road, its landscape, fellow humans and the natural world. I have addressed how material culture is entangled in this process of making meaning. As argued throughout, the materiality of the wagon road shifted through its entanglement in the lives of the Stl'atl'imx and the 38 years of Grade 10 students who completed the Harrison Hike. Embedded in the tangible 'things' of these experiences (ruts in the road, campfire hearths, mossy cliffs, rock cairns) are the intangible – the meanings, emotions, memories and knowledge that continues to connect individuals like Elder Laura Purcell and student/principal George Kozlovic to the road and its landscape.<sup>51</sup>

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***Up Close and Personal: Feeling the Past at Urban Archaeological Sites***  
**TRACY IRELAND**

Markers of memory and identity are increasingly manifested in urban landscapes in forms both literal and material. In cities with settler colonial origins, archaeology has become a frequent means by which these markers are produced. Archaeological remains conserved in situ – frozen in an urban ‘time slice’– embed genealogies and narratives of origins in the layered fabric of the city.

Archaeological excavation, followed by the conservation in situ of the excavated remains (that is preserving them in the place where they were found), is a process of making a particular past visible, while the associated processes of urban design, display techniques and technologies, and particular interpretative strategies, work towards providing for different kinds of engagements with these archaeological traces.<sup>1</sup> Comparing the ‘Big Dig’ archaeological site conserved in situ in Sydney, Australia, with the Pointe-à-Callière Musée d’archéologie et d’histoire in Montreal, Canada, I explore how the affective, aesthetic qualities of these ruins produce emotions and embodied experiences that are interpreted as sustaining identity and cultural memory. Using Sara Ahmed’s concept of ‘affective economies’, I want to understand what is distinctive about this particular form of social/emotional/material entanglement, and explore what these ruins ‘do’ in the context of the city and how they appear to create stable objects of memory and identity from a much more contingent and complex matrix of politics, social structures, and the more-than-human materiality of the city.<sup>2</sup>

**THE BIG DIG SITE**

First, let’s take a walk through the historic district of the Rocks on Sydney Harbour. Tourists and locals come here to enjoy its distinctive urban landscape of modest Georgian buildings, narrow lanes and steep staircases cutting between streets quarried into the sandstone promontory that today anchors the Harbour Bridge. The Cumberland and Gloucester Street excavation site is up high above the waterfront, close to the arched approaches to the Bridge. It is also known as the Big Dig Education Centre, as the remains were incorporated into a youth hostel and education facility in an innovative design by Tzannes Architects. The site was first excavated in the 1990s by Godden Mackay Logan Heritage Consultants (GML), working with historian Grace Karskens, who together produced a number of important publications about the site and also advised on its conservation and interpretation.<sup>3</sup>

The conserved site opened to the public in 2009-2010, and it is possible for visitors to wander amongst the ruins and remains, to walk on the flagstones of an early laneway, to cross worn thresholds and enter the foundations of small-roomed houses built by

convicts and their families in the first few decades of colonial settlement. The stone building remains intersect with, and in places incorporate or modify, the tilted sedimentary layers of the natural, sandstone bedrock, outcrops of which gave this district its name of 'The Rocks'.<sup>4</sup>

The early 2000s saw a sharp rise in the number of displays based on archaeological remains conserved in situ in Sydney. A few colonial sites had been conserved earlier, particularly in the Rocks as well as the remains of the first Government House, built in 1788, which were excavated in the 1980s and incorporated into the Museum of Sydney, which opened in 1995. However, the increase in displays clustered in the historic centre of Sydney, and in Parramatta, the second colonial settlement, suggested that between the 1980s – when historical archaeological excavations began to regularly occur prior to development – and the first decade of the twenty-first century, significant changes had occurred in the perceived value and meaning of these archaeological sites over this period.

I have explored some of the political and cultural contexts for these changes in earlier publications, along with the results of a survey that explored visitor experiences and opinions.<sup>5</sup> This research was aimed at thinking more deeply about the process and outcomes of conservation in situ, approached largely from the archaeological heritage management perspective. However, my experience of taking student groups to these sites, and observing the impact that different types of archaeological displays had, inspired me to ask further questions about what is distinctive in the way these archaeological remains of the colonial, settler past evoke emotional responses that produce experiences or feelings that are articulated as pertinent to identity and to shared cultural memory.

The experience of physical intimacy with material relics from the past was a feature of many of the responses to my survey and this echoed community-based research by Sian Jones in the United Kingdom on how people experience the 'authenticity' of heritage objects.<sup>6</sup> She argued that a particularly intense and contagious experience of 'authenticity' results when people have physical access to heritage objects, and how the traditional processes of heritage conservation, which often dictate the closing off of access and opportunities for touching old materials, may in fact diminish how the authenticity or cultural value of conserved items might be perceived and experienced by individuals and communities. Attempting to further unpack Jones' description of the experience of authenticity as a 'numinous quality' or an 'enchantment' of materials objects, Cornelius Holtorf argued that authenticity is perceived through qualities of 'pastness', which are experienced 'as a consequence of perceptible material clues indicating wear and tear, decay, and disintegration, among other factors'.<sup>7</sup> Importantly, he comments on the fact that, to be legible as 'pastness', these material and visual clues must conform in some way to contemporary stereotypes, or preconceived notions about the past.

I want to come back to these ideas about the web or network of relationships between people and objects, embodied experiences of materiality and place, and an aesthetic code for 'pastness'. But first I will turn to Sara Ahmed's concept of 'affective economies' as a helpful framework for approaching these questions about what archaeological remains and ruins 'do', and what this means for how social experiences of memory and identity are produced through heritage places and things.

#### ECONOMIES OF AFFECT

Sara Ahmed is prominent among scholars from a range of disciplines who are concerned with the role of emotions in different forms of social and political attachment, interrogating the role of feelings in how individuals make sense of their place in the world, where they belong to, and who they belong with.<sup>8</sup> Ahmed describes affect as what 'sticks', or what sustains the connection between ideas, values and objects, challenging the notion that emotions and feelings are only private things. She has been concerned to understand how emotions travel between bodies, how they are produced by material and social worlds of discourse and politics and how 'they connect or align individuals with communities' and 'bodily space with social space'.<sup>9</sup> Arguing that 'affective economies' need to be seen as social and material, as well as psychic, she suggests that 'the accumulation of affective value shapes the surfaces of bodies and worlds'.<sup>10</sup> However, Ahmed's aim is not so much to understand or identify these emotions as if universal and purely embodied or originating within the body, but to understand the political and economic structures that produce these effects, thus exposing the social norms that these emotional responses invest in. She argues that 'feelings appear in objects, or indeed as objects with a life of their own, only by the concealment of how they are shaped by histories, including histories of production – labor and labor time – as well as circulation and exchange'.<sup>11</sup>

I suggest Ahmed describes here an important aspect of how heritage acts as a material structure for the accumulation of affect around identity, belonging and attachment, and thus how the emotional experience of authenticity and other material qualities works to conceal (at least to some extent) the social, political and economic history of the production of this effect. For ruins and archaeological remains, deep histories are in place that make some materials and places particularly 'sticky' with affect – the worn stone threshold, the broken fragment of a china doll, crumbling masonry. They evoke what John Ruskin termed a 'mysterious sympathy' which both Sian Jones and Cornelius Holtorf have interpreted as a visual, material code for authenticity, a code that reproduces notions about what the past should look and feel like.<sup>12</sup>

#### COLONIAL RUINS

I next want to consider the relevance to this discussion, and to this notion of a visual code for authenticity that works to accumulate affect, with the power and persistence of the language of desire that surrounds ruins and archaeological remains in the

western cultural imaginary, which received its expression in eighteenth century and later Romanticism.<sup>13</sup> In the twenty-first century we are seeing a renewed interest in the legacy of Romanticism – an interest in exploring feelings, aesthetic responses and against the over-rationalisation of scientific approaches. Such an approach seems very appropriate to the study of cultural heritage and of how and why people form attachments to places and the narratives that surround them. Sara Ahmed's agenda, however, carefully distinguishes itself from an interest in the Romantic. Her aim is not to return to, or reinvigorate, the Romantic tradition, but rather to counter it by clearly pointing out that she does not see emotions as a pathway to an alternative source of truth. For Ahmed, 'emotions are effects rather than origins'.<sup>14</sup>

The Romantic view of ruins centred on how they linked temporality and materiality, place and history and the power of this connotation to alter the perception of the witnessing subject. However, contemporary ruin discourses, Andreas Huyssen and Kevin Hetherington both claim, depart from the Romantic confidence in progress and are more obsessed with the past 'as a source of refuge in uncertain times'.<sup>15</sup> In a related vein, Anne Laura Stoler's notion of 'imperial debris' also seeks to carefully avoid the melancholic gaze of colonial nostalgia. She seeks to use the power of ruins to 'condense alternative senses of history' in order to expose the longevity of structures of colonial dominance.<sup>16</sup>

I suggest that the Romantic concept of the sensuous, individual subject remains central to contemporary ruin discourse and to related cultural discourses of archaeology and heritage, as work by Hamilakis and Handler, which I discuss below, also attests. But the legacy of Romantic thought in both archaeology and heritage has been deliberately de-emphasised in the settler societies of Australia and Canada, where the empirical objectivity of the archaeological record, or the 'archaeological resource' as it was often termed, was strategically emphasised as part of the professionalization of these domains in the twentieth century.

Bruce Trigger's *History of Archaeological Thought* stressed the dichotomy between universalism and romanticism in the development of modern archaeology. He claims that both nationalism and postmodernism grew out of romanticism and idealism, and that their coming together in the field of archaeology produced an unresolved tension at the heart of the discipline.<sup>17</sup> However, Yannis Hamilakis' more recent study of archaeology and Hellenic nationalism argues persuasively that the entanglement of archaeology and so-called 'modern' forms of nationalism and heritage must recognise that these cultural forms have not evolved in a linear succession, but as 'hybrids, reformulations and modifications', encompassing enduring pre-modern forms of understanding. He concludes emphatically that in Greece, modern 'archaeology has not constituted a radical break from previous experiential encounters with the material past'.<sup>18</sup>

The colonial, archaeological remains that I explore here clearly do not resemble the monumental ruins of ancient temples found by colonial explorers. But the ways in



which they are experienced, and the emotional responses they produce, are nevertheless shaped by both a 'modernist' understanding of their scientific archaeological value – that is, how they have been produced by the scientific process of archaeological excavation and how they embody the research potential of archaeological evidence, as well as by the trope of the sensuous materiality of ruins, recognised through their visual traits of authenticity. The Romantics described ruins in terms of their ability to create a space for individual contemplation, for desire and longing. The desire for heritage, for experiences of memory and identity, can be equated with what Richard Handler has described as the 'desire for authenticity' and his concept of 'possessive individualism', where individuals seek to sustain not only their sense of their individual essence but also their sense of belonging to a cultural collectivity through possession of authentic culture.<sup>19</sup> 'Ruin memory' thus remains significant in understanding the aesthetic effects and affective intensity of these sites, as well as their interpretation as sustenance for identity and belonging, despite the modernist, scientific practices of heritage conservation and archaeological heritage management that shaped their excavation and preservation.

#### POINTE-À-CALLIÈRE, MONTREAL MUSEUM OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY

I now turn to my second example of colonial archaeological remains conserved in situ, in Montreal in the francophone province of Quebec in Canada. As in the Rocks in Sydney, the colonial past is palpable and inescapable in Quebec. Heritage and cultural tourism were two key contexts studied by anthropologist Richard Handler in his influential ethnographic study of Quebecois nationalism published in 1988.<sup>20</sup> The Pointe-à-Callière Musée d'archéologie et d'histoire opened in 1992. This year marked the 350th anniversary of the founding of Montreal, and just as we saw in Sydney in the years before 1988 – the bicentenary of colonial settlement – heritage projects intensified in Quebec in the lead up to this significant commemoration. This followed decades of fraught cultural politics culminating in the narrowly defeated 1995 independence referendum.<sup>21</sup>

Pointe-à-Callière is essentially presented as an origin site for Montreal, making visible the origins of francophone 'civilisation' in North America, just as the first acts of British colonisation in Australia are made manifest at the Museum of Sydney.<sup>22</sup> Interest in the archaeology of colonial settlement in Quebec developed only from the 1970s. It has been outlined by Pierre Desrosiers, with a particular focus on the emergence of forms of in situ conservation and other museological approaches deriving from, he suggests, the 'living history museum' approach developed by Artur Hazelius in Sweden in 1891, an approach later used at Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia in the USA.<sup>23</sup> Desrosiers points out that by the late 1990s more than 60 per cent of 476 'museological institutions' or heritage sites in Quebec presented historical interpretations 'in the places where that history took place'; that is, on archaeological sites.<sup>24</sup>

This focus on preserving archaeological sites in situ – for which Quebec has an international reputation – echoes Norah's description of lieux de memoire, emphasising the territoriality of colonial history as a basis for sovereignty and cultural uniqueness.<sup>25</sup> Desrosiers suggests that this situation causes a tension, or 'rupture', in the heritage management of these sites, between more meaningful archaeological research that would contextualise the archaeological collections, and the work that is demanded to service the day to day demands of the interpretative and exhibition programs that these sites must continually refresh and update. However, Desrosiers also proposes that archaeologists in Quebec have 'little interest' in questions of epistemology and theory, and that historical archaeology has concerned itself largely with questions of methodology, and around urban development and regional settlement.<sup>26</sup>

Pointe-à-Callière Musée d'archéologie et d'histoire, Museum of Archaeology and History in Montreal, September 2012 (Photograph Tracy Ireland)

Pointe-à-Callière has been carefully shaped to present a 'diachronic' presentation of multiple periods from the past, directly inspired by the crypt of Notre Dame de Paris, which also displays material from the many different periods of past construction that lie beneath the pavement around the cathedral.<sup>27</sup> Pointe-à-Callière is a more formal site museum than my Sydney example. It is presented as the 'birthplace of Montreal, but with a distinctive authenticity achieved by the way in which the site has been conserved and presented in a subterranean crypt where visitors can mingle closely with, and even touch, ruins and surfaces from different periods from Montreal's past. It is this form of presentation that led me to a comparison of Pointe-à-Callière and the Big Dig site in Sydney, rather than what might seem to be its more likely counterpart as an 'origin site', The Museum of Sydney on the site of the first Government House.

The archaeological remains displayed at the Museum of Sydney are both remotely behind glass, and also focused solely on the house, although the Museum has a broader historical and cultural scope. The displays at Pointe-à-Callière focus more closely on a sense of place, including the lost natural environment, than the Big Dig site in Sydney. Its houses and yards, along with its rich artefact displays, evoke individuals and families and a past neighbourhood or community. While individuals are conjured through interpretative techniques at Pointe-à-Callière, it more straightforwardly presents the origins of French colonialism in North America, and closely details the complex evolution of the urban fabric of Montreal. The darkened archaeological crypt enhances the tactile and visual qualities of the stone, earth and timber remains and visitors walk on surviving stone flags from demolished, earlier buildings. Contrasting with the aged patina of the in situ materials, digital screens display reconstructions of what has been lost, and the fragility and rarity of what has been preserved.

#### THE DIALECTICS OF THE CITY

'humans make cities, but not exactly as they please'<sup>28</sup>

Finally, I bring us back to a consideration of how memory and place are entangled in the urban context. In a straightforward way, Pointe-à-Callière is a monument to the origins of francophone civilisation in North America. But at another level it can be read as a loving homage to the city of Montreal. Discussing memory and the city, anthropologist Michael Herzfeld has compared the 'stratigraphic richness of the truly organic city', to the ossified, over-conserved historic site. Herzfeld suggests that while Rome remains a vibrant organic city, he cites Athens and Bangkok as examples of cities which have alienated their past through over-conservation and planning. It seems that Herzfeld, too, pines for the Romantic, neglected ruin outside social control, to experience authenticity in the city.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, archaeologist Laurent Olivier claims that for archaeology to be possible at all, there needs to be that moment of 'otherness', a recognition of difference between the present and the past, and that this sense of alienation again replicates a Romantic approach to modernity.<sup>30</sup>

It is clear that in the settler context this process of alienation has indeed been fundamental to the creation of the archaeological sites I am considering here. I have briefly referred to the rise of historical archaeology (as the archaeology of the colonial period) from the 1970s in both Sydney and Montreal. This process materially consolidated the haphazard evidence of European colonial expansion into an industrious founding of nations and national cultures. Thus archaeology has been a technique via which the progress and modernity of Montreal and Sydney is illustrated in their deep urban layers, contrasting the steel and concrete of today, with modest, fragile, colonial origins.

The conservation in situ of these archaeological remains contributes to the perceived richness of the layered urban fabric of Sydney and Montreal. But they are also quite separate from it due to the technologies of material conservation that are deployed to stabilise the archaeological fabric in a form created by both a scientific/stratigraphic reading of it as archaeological evidence, as well as an aesthetic rendering based on a visual code of authenticity, that demands perceptible clues to the passage of time. Shannon Lee Dawdy has recently given a compelling account of how archaeology, as a means of analysing materiality, might add a missing dimension to urban studies by focusing on the instability of the 'archaeological time slice' and by viewing it dialectically – not as a stable materialisation of a moment of history, but as a 'vibrant' illustration of 'the dialogue between the past and the present, and the tense feedback loop between human intention and material agency'.<sup>31</sup>

These conserved archaeological sites present a paradox. They attempt to stabilise and materialise a particular memory of the city. However, conservation has artfully and intentionally created these ruins. And yet these materials are not stable and wholly within human control. They remain embedded in the more-than-human earthen matrix of the city substrate, subject to unexpected eruptions of ground water, salt attack and biological growths – an object lesson in the vibrancy of matter and of forces outside culture and human intention.<sup>32</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS: MEMORY OBJECTS

'Qu'est-ce qui reste quand on a tout oublié? L'objet...'33

In their excellent overview of memory and place Carole Blair, Greg Dickinson and Brian L. Ott put forward a number of propositions as generally accepted in memory studies: that memory takes place in groups; is activated by present concerns; that it narrates shared identities and concepts of belonging; and relies on material and/or symbolic supports.<sup>34</sup> In exploring these two sites of archaeological conservation in situ as materialities of memory and identity, I have been concerned to understand more deeply how they work in social, emotional and material terms. As many commentators have observed, memory is organised and ordered by place, and place is experienced through the body and the senses, as well as through discourse and politics.<sup>35</sup> This encounter with archaeological remains can be seen as a social behaviour that allows both an experience of identity and memory, or an encounter with the past as, and of, 'the other'.

Michael Herzfeld has critiqued the 'discovery' of memory by archaeologists, suggesting they have been too quick to replace previous concepts, such as cultural 'influence' or 'structures', with 'memory', in an attempt to 'democratise' their interpretations of the past and move away from 'top down deterministic structuralist approaches', towards something that is felt to be more personal and individual.<sup>36</sup> However, he suggests that this approach tends to reproduce uncritical assumptions about 'belonging and possession', which he associates with Nora's lieux de memoire, a concept he in turn calls out 'as clear and unreflective an indication of the link between the ideology of possessive individualism and the ownership of the national patrimoine as one could ever find in scholarly writing'.<sup>37</sup> In a similar vein, Alexander Etkind, recalling Walter Benjamin's insight that 'memory is not an instrument for exploring the past but its theatre', suggests:

materializing memory in the public sphere often entails fiction rather than truth, allegories rather than facts, an irony rather than tragedy. These allegoric images both retain their dependency on the past and affirm the present's striking difference from it. Mimicking the past, they also assert that the past has passed... these allegoric images work as mnemonic tools that revive the past and, simultaneously, as artistic devices that celebrate its death.<sup>38</sup>

Conservation in situ enlists these archaeological remains in public memory work that is both allegorical and rhetorical, and the 'up close and personal' experience of the material past that they provide intensifies the experience of authenticity, perceived through the deep history of ruins and the sensuous qualities of the patina of age. In understanding heritage as a material structure for the 'accumulation of affect', I argue that the affective qualities of ruins and archaeological traces, and of how people feel heritage and the past through aesthetic and sensuous experiences of materiality, authenticity, locality and identity, bring us closer to understanding how heritage works.

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